



Hasan Bin Sabbah

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Ustad-Fil-Uloom-il-Arabiyya

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PREFACE

This book is the fourth in the series of works published by the Isma'ilia Association of Pakistan and is about the life of al-Hasan b. as-Sabbah the greatest da'i which the Nizari community has ever had. He was one of the greatest Muslim leaders who made the most powerful rulers bow before his will and who turned the course of history as he pleased.

Many writers and historians, old and modern have attempted to write the life-story of Hasan but have not achieved any considerable success in clearing some obscure aspects of his life and in solving some subtle points relating to his activities. I have tried to remove this shortcoming and fill the gap in the life-sketch of this great man by writing this book which I hope will prompt the scholars of history to produce a better work than this and which is designed to be a help to the students.

I take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to Doctor Peermohammed Hoodbhoy, wazir of His Royal Highness the Prince Agha Khan, and President of the Ismailia Association of Pakistan; and to the Secretary-General of the Ismailia Association, Mr. Sherali for their constant encouragement for the preparation of this work. I thank my friend Prof. Dr. Abbas al-Hamdani for his precious help in translating this book in English, and Molvi Abd al-Ghafir Hydera-abadi for translating it into Urdu. I am very grateful to the Isma'ilia Association of Pakistan which has given me this opportunity for compiling the present work.

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During the generation of the PDF version of this book, minor spelling and grammatical corrections have been made.

HASAN B. AS-SABBAH

Historical Background

A variety of books about Hasan b. as-Sabbah that come to one's notice depict him as a blood-thirsty monster who was after eliminating the best elements from the Islamic Community and who imposed his authority on people by means of terror and assassination at the hands of his blood-thirsty fida'is (followers). Others describe him as a dissolute heretic who wanted to spread his creed either by means of deception or jugglery or by means of a free use of the dagger. Some surround him with a halo of piety and reverence and consider him a champion of Islam who dedicated his life to protect the faith against innovations. If all this at all signifies anything, it signifies the lack of accuracy on the part of the writers and their hastiness in giving an opinion about Hasan without proper study. So much so that some of the eminent modern writers, like Ahmad Amin, make Hasan a descendant of Ali b. Abi Talib. This clearly shows the unscrupulousness of these historians in their discussion of Hasan. They seem to take information about him on its face-value without trying to verify the truth thereof.

About nine hundred years have elapsed since the death of Hasan, the missionary-genius. He still

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remains a topic of discussion among the Muslim writers and historians who have been unable until now to offer a satisfactory explanation about him which would be impartial. There are some who are obsessed by their dislike of Hasan; while there are others who go to the extent of defending everything about him because of their sympathetic attitude. The actions of Hasan and all that he stood for appear to some as heinous crimes; while to others as something that could be looked upon with pleasure and comfort. An Arab poet has said: "A friendly attitude overlooks all defects whereas a hostile attitude points out only faults."

Besides these, there is a group of Muslim writers -the moderns- who in their works have tried to rise above prejudice and religious bias which were the bane of the early writers. In this respect they have succeeded to some extent, except that they judge the events from a mere political angle. They look to the activities of Hasan from a particular angle and analyse them politically, thinking that whatever Hasan did was an attempt to change the existing social system and to create a political revolution by over-throwing the Abbasid regime and the Saljuqid power. Thus, Hasan, according to them, was a political leader; his wars were political ones and the Isma'ili faith and the Nizarid mission were the guise he adopted to come to power. He knew that the people were attracted more by an object of thought than by a tangible

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object. Therefore, he proclaimed Nizar as Imam and gave a hope to the Isma'ilis, of better times at the approaching advent of the Imam in hiding. This is how they view Hasan. These writers cannot realise that Hasan could be a personality religiously sincere about his faith and principles, that he could justify his actions by a pure religious necessity which transcends all personal political considerations. This is because religion, in the opinion of the majority of the educated people, is a preoccupation for the masses and they do not imagine that Hasan's genius could be influenced by religion and its dictates. To them people are of two kinds, as Abu'l-'Ala would classify-"the rational without religion and the religious devoid of intelligence" According to them Hasan was not a religious person; he was not even a mischief-monger, but purely a politician who aspired for power and authority and to achieve this he followed the political conduct of those times. These writers, however, were no better in their understanding of Hasan than others. If Hasan was as they have depicted him to be, he would not have adopted a life of poverty and strict asceticism. If he so wished, he could have had all the comforts of life for the asking but he deliberately chose austerity and renunciation. All the historians are agreed that Hasan's life at the fortress of Alamut was one of abstinence and hardship. He was a model of piety and righteousness. His men shared his qualities. He gave them a religious training and imposed upon them a strict system. He would

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not allow anyone to drink or commit any wrong. on the charge of He killed one of his sons drinking. He turned away one of his favourite followers simply because he used to amuse himself with his flute. He also trained his wives and daughters to earn their own living by knitting, whereas he was not a poor man and was in a position to support them.

The truth about Hasan will never be concealed from one who studies his life side by side with his times, for history after all is not just a narration of events and happenings. These are but a phenomenon of history which arise out of the material and spiritual conditions prevailing in that particular time and are indicated in many forms. It becomes necessary for one who seeks truth or is desirous of ascertaining facts and culling the exact information from the recesses of the past, to study history from all angles and imbibe the spirit of the times under review, for one does not arrive at a correct view-point by considering the mere events shorn of all causes and context that link the past and the present; and the cause and the effect. Thus, the history of mankind is a chain of cause and effect. The rise and fall in case of peoples and personalities do not arise out of chance but as a result of this causation. The requirements of writing a historical sketch demand taking into consideration various factors that mould the activities of any person or community. It becomes necessary, therefore, to have an idea of the circumstances in which Hasan lived and of

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the conditions that existed prior to his times in order that we may get a correct picture of his life and work.

The Muslim world in the three centuries -third, fourth and fifth of Hijra- was in a condition of utter confusion and the life of the Muslims was torn between many contradictions. Though the intellectual life of the time had improved; institutions of learning flourished and people took increasing interest in education, yet chaos generally prevailed in all the strata of Islamic community. Economic conditions deteriorated to such an extent that the people were forced to eat corpses. The administration was in a decay. Anarchy and religious disorders increased, mausoleums were destroyed and the libraries burnt. Thousands of souls perished as a result of starvation, disease and rioting. Peace and security had vanished. Weakness had set in the Abbasid state which was now on the decline. It was split into petty principalities; one fighting against another and being jealous of it. Ummayyads declared themselves independent in Spain and the Ikhshidids in Egypt. North Africa was occupied by the Fatimids while the Hamdanids were at Aleppo and the frontiers. Iraq was in the hands of the Daylamites while Qarmatians were ruling at Yamama, Bahrayn, Uman and the interior of Basra. Buwayhids held their sway in Ahwaz and the rest of Persia; Samanids in Khurasan and Transoxiana; descendants of Sabuktagin in India and Afghanistan and the

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Alids in Tabaristan. In short, the Abbasid Empire was dismembered and its influence was gradually shrinking. From this it can be inferred that the Muslim peoples, particularly the Arabs did not like the transfer of power to the Abbasids who had sought the help of the Persians and had relied upon them in the government of the country and had turned away from the Arabs who no longer were in any important post in the Abbasid regime. As soon as they had assumed power, most of the Arab tribes revolted and the Islamic Empire was rent with civil wars. These conditions continued till the end of the Abbasid period.

The Abbasid Caliphate was not based on sound foundations, for it suffered from three drawbacks. Firstly, the Abbasids disliked their own people -the Arabs- and removed them from key positions. Secondly, they were inclined towards foreign elements with whom they had no relations. They employed first the Persians; then the Turks. Foreigners became governors, leaders, revenue collectors and other important officers. Thirdly they appropriated all power, depriving the Arabs of their rights and killing and destroying them, so much so that the Shia took to secrecy and hiding. It is but natural that one who hates his own kind and becomes selfish and tyrannical makes room for temptations and deceit. These three big mistakes which the Abbasids committed led to their downfall, and division of the Empire into

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various small principalities as mentioned above. Let us now describe in detail the conditions that preceded Hasan's time which may form a background to his life and activities.

The Saffarids:

The Saffarid dynasty was founded in Sijistan by Yaqub as-Saffar who held a great power, in the times of the Abbasid Mu'tazz. He extended his influence to the provinces of Kirman, Persia, Khurasan and Tabaristan. This state was a great danger to the Abbasid regime and threatened it from time to time. When its influence became widespread and its pressure increased the Abbasid Mu'atamid induced Isma'il b. Ahmad Saman in 287 H. to move against the Saffarid State. Isma'il, consequently, routed the armies of the Saffarids and took their king Umar b. Ya'qub al-Layth prisoner. The latter was succeeded by his grandson Tahir b. Muhammed b. Umar as-Saffari, who also was taken prisoner in 290 H. while endeavouring to re-establish the reign of his dynasty in Persia. In 292 H. Sijistan came under the sway of the Samanids and the Caliph at Baghdad confirmed their rule. It was like changing one evil for another, for when the Samanids established themselves well, they assumed dictatorial powers and founded an independent Samanid state just as others before them had become independent in the Abbasid Empire.

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The Samanids:

Saman was a Zoroastrian from a noble family of Balkh and had become Muslim at the instance of Asad b. Abd Allah the ruler of Khurshan. He named his son 'Asad' as a token of respect for his patron. In 204 H. the Abbasid Caliph Ma'mun b. ar-Rashid, in appreciation for the services of the sons of Asad b. Saman, made Nuh governor over Samarqand; Ahmad, over Farghana; Yahya over Shash and Ilyas over Herat. Ahmad got the better of the other brothers because of his superiority and ability in political and military affairs. To his domains, he added Samarqand and Kashghar. His son Isma'il took Khurshan from the Saffarids and Tabaristan from Muhammad b. Zayd, the Alid. He, then, extended his rule to the Great Desert until the Persian Gulf and from the borders of India to the vicinity of Baghdad. Ahmad was succeeded by his son Nasr who appropriated all power in the times of Mu'atamid and did not content himself to be a ruler on behalf of the Abbasids as his father had done. It was Nasr who embraced the Isma'ili faith at the hands of Abu Abd Allah an-Nasafi, the Isma'ili da'i (missionary). Under the regime of the Samanids, the famous poet Firdawsi, the composer of Shahnama began his literary career. The physician-philosophers Abu Bakr ar-Razi and ash-Shaykh Abu Ali b. Sina were for a short time under the patronage of the Samanid court. The kings of this dynasty were eleven, first being Nasr b. Ahmad Sama and the last Isma'il b. Nuh.

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Their rule lasted until 395 H. when they were replaced by the Ghaznawids.

The Ziyarids:

In 316 H. the Ziyarid State was founded in Jurjan by Mardawij b. Ziyar, the Daylami leader who revolted in 315 H., killed Asfar b. Shiruyeh, the ruler of Jurjan and occupied Qazwin, Rayy, Hamadan, Kankur, Daynur, Qumm, Qashan, Isfahan, Tabaristan etc. He had a throne of gold made for himself. The Caliph Muqtadir sent an army to fight him but it was routed. He appropriated all those territories which could not defend themselves against him. Muqtadir had to be content with this. This state lasted until 340 H. It had six kings, the first being Mardawij b. Ziyar and the last Anushirwan b. Manuchihr. During the reign of Qabus b. Washmagir, the fourth king of the Dynasty, the Ghaznawid state came into being in what is now called Afghanistan.

The Ghaznawids:

The founder of this dynasty was Sabuktigin, the slave of Abu Ishaq b. Alptagin, the commander of the army of Ghazna in the Samanid State. Before Alptagin died he made his slave Sabuktigin the commander of the Army as he had no son of his own. Sabuktigin then onwards ruled Ghazna, from 366 H. His state became powerful and he raided India many times and occupied much of its

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territory. He was the founder of the Ghaznawid State. When he died his eldest son Mahmud was in Naysapur. The latter's brother Ismail took advantage of this opportunity and declared himself king. Mahmud wrote to him informing him of his rights, he being the elder, but Ismail did not reply. Mahmud proceeded against him, fought him and took him prisoner. He assumed the title of Sultan and is supposed to have been the first to do so. Sultan Mahmud was the most illustrious ruler of this dynasty. He has campaigns to his credit. It was he who finally put an end to the Samanid State. He occupied Khurasan in 384 H. and discontinued the Khutba for the Samanids. Under Mahmud's reign lived the mathematician-philosopher Abu Rayhan Al-Biruni and the great Persian poet Abul-Qasim Al-Firdawsi. The rule of the Ghaznawid dynasty lasted for 213 years. It had seventeen kings, the first being Sabuktigin and the last Malik Shah b. Khusraw.

The Ikhshidids and the Fatimids:

The Ikhshidids ('Ikhshid is a Farghani word which means 'the king of kings') ruled in Egypt. The Abbasid Caliph ar-Radi had appointed Muhammad b. Taghaj as governor of Egypt in 323 H. but the latter aspired to be the king. Radi tried in vain to depose him from his rule over Egypt and Syria. This dynasty lasted from 323 H. to 362 H. The number of the kings was five, the first

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being Muhammad b. Taghaj al-Ikhshid and the last being Abu'l-Fawaris b. Ali who had to fight with Jawhar as-Saqilli, the Commander on behalf of the Fatimid al-Mu'izz, who ultimately occupied Egypt. The Fatimids, thus established in Egypt, ruled the country for 209 years. During this period, they expanded their rule considerably. Even Baghdad was incorporated into the Fatimid Empire in the time of al-Mustansir bi'llah in whose name the Khutba was read in this city for one full year. The Fatimid rulers of Egypt number fourteen, the first being Mu'izz and the last 'Adil, from whom Salah ad-Din, the Ayyubid took over in 567 H.

The Buwayhids:

The Buwayhid State originated in 321 H. during the reign of the Abbasid al-Qahir, by the efforts of the three brothers Ali b. Buwayh, Hasan b. Buwayh and Ahmad b. Buwayh. These three were in the service of Makan b. Kaki, the Dylamite in Tabaristan. When Mardawij b. Ziyar occupied the country, they joined in his service. Ali was made Governor over Karj. The people of the place liked him very much and made him their king. Then he extended his kingdom to Isfahan and Arrajan. He sent his brother Hasan to Kazrun and other places in Persia. He gathered much wealth and occupied Shiraz. Their prestige was enhanced particularly when Ahmad extended his authority to Baghdad during the reign of Mustakfi, who had to give Ahmad the

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title "Mu'izz ad-Dawla"; to Ali, the title "Imad ad-Dawla" and to Hasan the title "Rukn ad-Dawla" and had to get their names introduced in the currency. Entire power passed to the hands of these three brothers and nothing but name remained for the Abbasid Caliph. This was evidenced by the fact that when Mu'izz ad-Dawla heard that Mustakfi was plotting to remove him, he sent two Daylamites who pulled the caliph out of his bed and led him walking to the house of Muizz ad-Dawla, who dethroned him and imprisoned him till he died This House ruled for about 125 years. One of the strongest things about this period was that the Abbasid Sunni Caliphate fell under the authority of the Buwayhids, who were fanatical Shi'a. The Buwayhids tolerated it inspite of their hatred for it and their belief in its falsity. The kings, however, have a political madhhab as opposed to the religious one and it plays an important part in their career. Religion is only a means by which the leaders want to attain their political ends, except those few who are true to religion. The Buywayhid state collapsed in 447 H. and in its stead sprang the Saljuqid state which has much to do with the life of Hasan and his community.

The Saljuqids:

They were Turks of the Khizr stock. Saljuq was the head of Saljuqid family who ruled many Muslim countries for a period of 271 year. In the beginning, Saljuq was a lieutenant in the

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army of the Turkish King Yabghu. He fell out with the king, collected his clan and supporters and proceeded towards the Muslim countries. He embraced Islam, began attacking the adjoining Turkish territories and turned out the Turkish governors. He extended his sway to Persia and Khurasan. In 429 H. Da'ud b. Mika'il b. Saljuq was prayed for from the pulpits of Marw. About that time his brother Tughril Beg b. Mika'il b. Saljuq occupied Naysapur, Balkh, Jurjan, Tabaristan, Khwarizm, the Jibal country, Hamadan, Hilwan and Rayy, and entered Baghdad in 447 H. The Abbasid Caliph recognised him as Sultan. In 455 H. Tughril died and was succeeded by his nephew Alp Arslan, the greatest of the Saljuqs.

At the advent of the Suljuqs, the Islamic world was in utter confusion. The Saljuqs were recent converts to Islam; were new to the city life and to the religious differences. They were extremely zealous about Islam and tried their utmost to bring about the political unity of the Islamic world in the person of the Caliph at Baghdad and to revive its glory. The germs of religious disorders and widespread political chaos in those times, however, affected them. After they established themselves, their zeal for religion was replaced by their lust for power and they were drawn in conditions of political strife and conflict. So much so that they engaged themselves in a civil war which continued for a long time.

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Since the circumstances of Hasan are associated with the Saljuqid rule, it becomes necessary to describe in detail the conditions leading up to the establishment of Hasan in Alamut. Let us now follow the main points of the narrative about the Suljuqid dynasty as given by Ibn-al-Athir. Qarut Bek heard the news of his brother Alp Arslan's death at Kirman and at once proceeded to Rayy in order to occupy his territories. Sultan Malikshah and Nizam al-Mulk had, however, preceded him in reaching Rayy and now came out to give him a battle near Hamadan. The battle was joined in Sha'ban as a result of which Qarut Bek had to flee; but he was later captured and killed by the order of Malikshah.

Sultan Malikshah had many sons - Barkiyaruq whose mother was Zubayda; Mahmud whose mother was Khatun; and Muhammad and Sanjar who were real brothers. When Malikshah died, the news of his death was kept secret by his wife Turkan Khatun. She wrote to the amirs and made them agree to take an oath of allegiance for her son Mahmud. Mahmud at that time was four years and few months old. Among the amirs that Khatun had summoned was Isma'il, an uncle of Barkiyaruq. She had won him over by a promise of marriage and had asked him to fight his nephew Barkiyaruq who was eldest of Malikshah's sons. Isma'il had responded to her call and gathered a big army, but before he could attain his end was killed by

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his own men. Khatun wrote to the Caliph Muqtadi to include her son's name in the Khutba.

The Caliph replied agreeing to accept her son for the Sultanate and to include his name in the Khutba provided that Taj al-Mulk would be the administrator with regard to the Command of the Army, Civil Affairs, Appointment of Governors and the Treasury. When Khatun received the Caliph's letter, she did not like to accept the terms, but had to do so as her son being a minor, was not allowed by Shari'a to be a ruler. It was Ghazaali, the famous theologian, who advised her so. She, however, replied to the Caliph who gave her son the title Nasir ad-Dunya Wa'd Din. Turkan Khatun, then sent orders to Isfahan for the arrest of Barkiyaruq fearing that being the eldest of Malikshah's sons, he would contest the sultanate with her son. He was arrested. In the meanwhile, after Malikshah's death, the Nizami Guards had taken possession of the arms that were stored by Nizam al-Mulk at Isfahan and had revolted. They now rescued Barkiyaruq from the prison, said the Khutba for him at Isfahan and made him the king in that city. The reason for the Nizami Guards' support for Barkiyaruq was that they hated Taj al-Mulk who was the enemy of Nizam al-Mulk and was accused of having killed him. When they had assembled together, they surrounded the fortress of Tabruk and took it by force. Khatun sent armies to fight Barkiyaruq. At the end of the month of Dhu'l-Hijja the two armies met and a fierce battle raged between them in which

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Khatun's forces suffered defeat. They retreated to Isfahan, but Barkiyaruq pursued them and besieged the town. Taj al-Mulk was with the army of Khatun, but after participating in the battle fled to Barawjird. He was, however, caught and brought to Barkiyaruq while he was engaged in the siege of Isfahan. Barkiyaruq knew his talents and wanted to make him his wazir. Taj al-Mulk tried to reconcile with the leaders of the Nizami Guards and distributed among them, 200,000 dinars cash and other goods. Thus, their hatred for him began to disappear. But when 'Uthman, the deputy of Nizam al-Mulk heard this he resented it and sought the help of the young Guards and made them take a vow that they would not be satisfied till they had killed the killer of their master. Taj al-Mulk's efforts had now come to naught. The Nizami Guards attacked him and tore him to pieces. He was killed in Muharram, 486 H. A finger of his was carried to Baghdad. He was a man of many qualities which were only marred by his killing Nizam al-Mulk.

Tutush, brother of Sultan Malikshah was for some time ruler of Damascus and its dependencies. When he heard of Malikshah's death, he began preparations of taking over his brother's kingdom. He mustered a big force and began occupying one territory after another. Thus, he occupied Aleppo, Antioch, Ruha, Harrah, Kahba, Nasibin, Mayyafariqin and the remainder of Diyar Beku and Adharbayjan.

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He committed many atrocities, killed the inhabitants of these towns and plundered their belongings.

The news of Tutush's military exploits reached his nephew Barkiyaruq b. Malikshah. The latter was very much perturbed. He prepared himself well and gathered a big army to stop the onslaught of his uncle. The two armies met for battle in which Barkiyaruq was defeated. This defeat, however, did not make Barkiyaruq lose hope of a decisive victory over his uncle. He prepared to rejoin battle and met his uncle again in a bloody fight. Many souls perished in this battle, Tutush was killed and his army scattered. Barkiyaruq's victory was complete.

Tutush had four sons: Ridwan, Abu Talib, Duqmaq and Bahram, and before dying had left the command to Ridwan. But the latter's brother Duqmaq contested the command with him. The fire of war flamed furiously between the two brothers and it resulted in the loss of many lives. Duqmaq's army was finally annihilated, and the victory secured for Ridwan.

Barkiyaruq's efforts to get the Sultanate and oust his brother Mahmud were frustrated. But he succeeded in succeeding him. After Sultan Mahmud's death, Barkiyaruq was appointed the Saljuq Sultan. His brother Muhammad now opposed him. Many battles were fought between them and the fighting prolonged and continued until

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497 H. when peace was made between the two brothers. It was agreed that Baghdad, the Jibal country, Hamadan, Isfahan and Rayy would go to Barkiyaruq. The sultanate would also be in his name and the Khutba at Bagdad would be read in his name. Muhammad, on the other hand, would get Adharbayjan, Diyar Bekir, Mosul and Peninsula and the Khutba, in these places, would be read in his name. Sanjar remained ruler of Khurasan and had his name read in the Khutba there. As for the Abbasid Caliph, he remained as helpless as ever.

The sons of the Wazir Nizam al-Mulk played a very active role in these civil wars. Each of them attached himself to one Saljuqid party or the other. Fakhr al-Mulk b. Nizam al-Mulk became wazir of Tutush while his brother Mu'ayyad al-Mulk became wazir of Barkiyaruq. When Tutush was killed and Muhammad opposed Barkiyaruq, Fakhr'l-Mulk now became the wazir of Barkiyaruq and Mu'ayyad al-Mulk, of Muhammad. When Barkiyaruq defeated Muhammad, he arrested Mu'ayyad al-Malk and beheaded him with his own hands.

We have summarised here the events connected with the Saljuqs and described their internecine warfare, because it was in the midst of these events that Hasan b. as-Sabbah lived, and it was these events that were responsible to a large extent in forming his religious and political attitude.

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Moreover, Hasan's party was subjected to much persecution at the hands of these Saljuquids. This we shall study in detail in its proper place. Had not Hasan garrisoned himself and his men in his unapproachable fortresses, and had he not organised the Fida'is to spread awe and terror in the ranks of Saljuquids, the latter would have completely annihilated Hasan's partisans and those who subscribed to his doctrines.

These political differences and struggles were not the only misfortunes that had made the life in those times miserable. There were also economic difficulties and the bureaucratic injustices which were hopelessly widespread. The famine was all over, to an unimaginable extent. People had sunk to the depths of poverty till they ate dogs, cats and corpses. The number of the dead from various fatal diseases increased heavily. Let it suffice to say that they could not bury the dead; and the corpses were thrown in the streets. Dogs and birds ate their flesh. The injustice of the rulers for the people was indeed severe. These rulers loved their wealth immensely. They imposed heavy taxes and indulged in tyranny and repression. Whenever a person died his family and people were put in extreme difficulty, for the government would send its agents to confiscate all his property. When these agents would not find anything to take, they would charge the family for misappropriation and concealment and would step

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all bounds in punishment. The ruling class did all this in order to spend lavishly over their luxuries.

The poet has said:

"O people, the Caliphate is lost. Go and seek
The Caliph of God revelling in the midst of
tambourin and lute."

The tyranny of the Government rose to such an extent that the people struck performance of religious duties and threatened to renounce religion. One of their poets says:

"I do not think that the tyranny over the people will cease

As long as they are ruled by a governor of the Abbasids."

In 375 H. they resolved not to pray when Samsam ad-Dawla announced a tax on cotton and silk material which were already sold at ten times its price. Once they revolted against one of the wazirs in Baghdad in the time of Amir Bakhtiyar and refused to pray, broke down the pulpits, burnt the bridges and committed many excesses in protest against the oppression of the rulers. This was an expression of the lowest depth of misery and social degradation of the masses.

The religious dissensions had no less disastrous

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effect upon the people. It had far-reaching consequences among the people. The religious turmoil between different sects increased and many curses and quarrels were exchanged. The learned people from whom peace and goodwill could be expected, were quite contrary in their behaviour. They incited the people to misdeeds and worked at upsetting the foundation of unity and the Islamic brotherhood. Let us reproduce a passage from the kamil of Ibn al-Athir in this matter: "Abu'l Qasim al-Bakri al-Maghrabi, the preacher came to Baghdad in this year (i.e. 475 H). He went to Nizam al-Mulk and won his favour. So, Nizam al-Mulk sent him to Baghdad and fixed a good salary for him. He lectured at Nizamiyya Madrasa and used to talk about the Hanbalites and find fault with them. He used to say that Sulayman never disbelieved, but it was the devils who disbelieved. Similarly, Ahmed did not disbelieve, but it was his companions who disbelieved. One day he went to the house of the Chief Qadi Abi Abd Allah ad-Damighani, by the Qala'in canal where a controversy took place between his men and the Hanbalites and it broke out into a riot. The house of Banu'l-Fara (the Hanbalites) was sacked and their books plundered. Among these books was one **Kitab as-Sifat** by Abu Ya-ala. Bakri used to read it when preaching and expose their baseness. Many quarrels and misunderstandings had existed between him and them. Bakri got the title of "Alim as-Sunna', (the Master of Tradition) from the court.

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He died in Baghdad and was buried near the tomb of Abil-Hasan al-Ashari."

Ibn al-Athir adds: "In Safar, 443, H. the Sunni-Shi'a riots broke out in Baghdad in a far graver form than before. It so happened that the people of Karkh wrote on their walls in golden letters, the words: 'Muhammad and Ali are the best of mankind' The Sunnis did not like this and asserted that the actual words were Muhammad and Ali are the best of mankind; whoever agrees to it is right and whoever denies it, disbelieves.'

The people of Karkh denied having written the additional words and said: "We have not written anything more than that what we write usually in our mosque. The Abbasid Caliph Qa'im bi Amr Allah sent the representative of the Abbasids, Abu Tammam and the representative of the Alids Adnan b. ar-Rida for investigation of the matter and stopping the riots. The Shi'a agreed to erase the words 'best of mankind' and wrote instead 'on whom be peace'. The Sunnis did not like this too and demanded the pulling down of bricks on which the words Muhammad and Ali' were written. The Qadi's Ibn al-Mudhahhab, Zuhri and other Hanbalites like the men of Abd as-Samad incited the people to rioting with all the vigour, and fanned the flames of this disorder which devoured thousands of people and burnt the market-places, mosques, mausoleums, and libraries containing precious books till the misery became universal. The fight lasted more

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than a month.

These, then, were the circumstances in which Hasan flourished, or you may say that such were the circumstances which gave rise to Hasan and his like from among the thinkers who strove to improve the conditions and cleanse the Islamic society of the meanness of the mischief-mongers and the devices of the greedy.

The disturbances of these times, the degenerate condition of society and the doctrinal schisms were obviously the main causes of the social, political and religious movements of those times and were the chief reasons why the secret parties and organisations sprang up which became the refuge of the people who wanted to escape from the clutches of disorder. They adopted various means - at times, the help of the Pen was sought, as in the case of Ikhwan as-Safa and at times the Sword provided the required succour, as in the case of various revolts. Sometimes both of these means were employed, as in the case of the Fatimids. At an earlier period, the holy Prophet had employed all these means at the rise of Islam.

Bravery, dash and the spirit of sacrifice are necessarily the characteristics of the insurrectionists; and a revolutionary does not need the hashish to dope himself in order to excite the above qualities. His sufferings are enough to make him a tower of strength and fortitude.

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The history of religious and political movements is replete with incidents of such bravery and dash, particularly the history of the Fatimids who had a bitter taste of tyranny, oppression and death at the hands of the Abbasids. As an example of those brave Isma'ili da'is, we may mention Abu'l-Fawaris who was brought before the Abbasid Caliph Mu'tadid. A discussion started between them. Mu'tadid asked: "Do you believe that the souls of God and His Apostles transmigrate in you and make you immune from decline and guide you to the right actions." The da'i replied: "O, you; even if the soul of the Satan were to transmigrate it would make no difference. Do not ask irrelevant things. Ask what concerns you. Mu'atadid said: "You tell me, then, as to what concerns me." The da'i replied: "When the Messenger of Allah (may the prayers and peace of Allah be on him) died, your ancestor 'Abbas was alive. Did he claim the Caliphate then: or did any of the Companions give an oath of allegiance to him? Then Abu Bakr died and Umar became a Caliph. He knew the position of 'Abbas, but did he nominate him Caliph after him. Again, when 'Umar died he left the question of his successor to be decided by the Electoral college composed of six persons. Your ancestor was not one of them. Then on what ground do you claim the Caliphate? The Companions of the Prophet, one and all, were agreed on the exclusion of your ancestor from Caliphate." It is remarkable to note how bold this da'i was.

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He did not fear the authority of Mu'atadid and addressed him just: "O, You", and followed up with arguments, frank and bold. Let us take another such example of a defying attitude. A person came to Ali b. Isa, the wazir of the Abbasid Caliph Muqtadir and informed him that he has a neighbour who is Qarmati from Shiraz, and that he carries on correspondence with Abu Tahir al-Junabi, the Carmathian Chief. He was summoned before the wazir and questioned. He admitted his collaboration with Abu Tahir and said: "I supported Abu Tahir with the firm belief that he was on the right; while you and your master are disbelievers." The wazir said: "Your like have infiltrated in our armies and you know them. Could you tell us who they are?" The man replied: "You hold your wazirate with such a low intelligence! Do you imagine that I will betray a righteous people to a band of disbelievers who would only kill them. I shall never do that". The wazir ordered that the man should be flogged. He was not given food and water till he died. Could anyone say that the courage of this man was a result of hashish?

This boldness was not a result of hashish or of a vision of Paradise (about which more later on) which are some of the causes, commonly attributed by the people to explain away the bravery of Hasan's followers. The main spurs, however, of this boldness and bravery are the faith and belief which Hasan inculcated in his followers.

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Hashish and Paradise, and causes originate merely in the imagination of story-tellers.

The Legend of Paradise.

Round the personality of Hasan and his community a variety of legends and stories have grown which only give us another proof of the greatness of Hasan and his people. Legends never arise around anyone who is not great and unusual.

The absolute obedience from his community that Hasan enjoyed taxed all the mental resources of the people of that time to explain. They failed to analyse his personality, as they had failed to find the secret of bravery and courage which distinguished Hasan's followers. The result was that they attributed to Hasan the use of magic and sorcery and invented stories and anecdotes to shroud his personality in obscurity and doubt. They held that Hasan had built a Paradise and that he was a magician. They also accused him of doping his men with hashish, by way of deception. They said he had divided his community in seven or nine sections. These and other accusations were hurled at him.

It is not surprising that when people cannot find the solution of a difficulty in the natural manner, they concoct a supernatural explanation, just as when they like or dislike a thing they go to extremes, invent superstitious stories and give vent to credulous tales.

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On the very same basis rest the myths of the Paradise, its houris and the stages of initiation.

Hasan truly was a great man; so were his deeds. He did things which even the most powerful men of his time could not do. Amidst the rough ocean of Saljuqid imperialism which could sweep over the lofty mountain of the Abbasid rule and other such powers Hasan had built for himself and his people a formidable island which could withstand the dashing waves of opposition and smash them into small scattered drops. He established his small state firmly in the thick of the mighty Saljuqid Empire which had snatched all authority from the hands of the Abbasid Caliph turning them into mere puppets. He created for his people a paradise of prosperity and progress in which reigned peace, contentment and tranquillity and whose atmosphere was filled with love and brotherly feeling amidst the environment outside, which was seething with confusion, tyranny of the rulers, oppression from the governors and a miserable economic condition which had reached the lowest depths of degradation. This was a great achievement, no doubt, that may have given vent to many stories and anecdotes.

According to me the Paradise that they said had existed in Alamut was none other but a symbolisation of the conditions of prosperity, satisfaction and peace which prevailed at that

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time in the territories which were under Hasan's control, particularly the fortress of Alamut. This was all the more striking in comparison with the conditions of general confusion, unrest and hunger prevailing among the people under the Abbasid regime which made them think of a real Paradise somewhere beyond their reach. Hasan, infact, trained his people thoroughly and laid the foundations of brotherhood, love and a relation between the individual and society fostered by strong bonds which made every individual feel that he was an important member of the society and that his life was meant to support that society. This was a matter which made the followers of Hasan create a renaissance in their religion and to sacrifice themselves in its path to an admirable extent. This made them, at the same time, the objects of superstitious stories which defied all historical analysis and could be counted merely as legends.

In short, the rise of Hasan and his community was a reaction to the conditions of repression that prevailed in those times and which affected the Islamic community in general and the Isma'ilis in particular. The religious fanaticism of the Saljuqs for the Isma'ilis continued. They perpetrated every evil against the Isma'ilis, subjected them to persecution and torture, killed them wherever they found them or hunted them down in every direction. The Isma'ilis always saw the spectre of death in front of them wherever they went.

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All this necessitated Hasan's seeking a shelter for himself and his co-believers to protect themselves from the murderous attacks of the enemies. For this he took refuge with his followers in some fortresses where they could be safe from all that oppression and live a life of peace and security. His enemies, however grudged him even this and pursued him with their enmity. They directed towards his fortresses organised attacks and systematic raids. They laid prolonged sieges round his castles so that the people in them may die of thirst and hunger.

Hasan hated war and avoided any commotion that would rob him of peace and disturb his life of seclusion, just as he objected to the shedding of blood and destroying innocent souls which the Amirs hurled in the fire of war, so that they may, thereby obtain power and kingdom. It is because of this that Hasan resorted to removing the causes of disorder, uprooting them from their origins and killing the germs of mischief that infected the selfish Amirs. He killed them and saved the believers from fight. This was an action which intelligence and justice could uphold, for if thousands could be saved from destruction by killing a few people, then the killing of these few was necessary and justifiable. Hasan looked at it from this angle. Hasan's men did not kill anyone out of hatred or rancour but out of their desire to save hundreds who would otherwise have been murdered or skinned alive. They only killed those who were the cause of mischief and misdeeds.

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This we say on the supposition that what the Abbasid dais reported was based on facts. But we at the same time know that the Abbasids had in their service a vast network of dais recruited from amongst historians, poets, theologians, traditionists, reporters of news and writers, some of whom they had bought over with money and gifts while the others they had subdued by the threats of deaths and destruction. They had recourse to propaganda whenever they felt the pinch of time and when they were weakened on account of the opposition's strength in the field of bravery and open struggle. The letter that Hasan had written to Sultan Malikshah, in reply to Malikshah's letter to him, throws much light on the real state of affairs which the Abbasid dais tried to hide from us and it reveals to us the actual facts. We reproduce below two letters, translated into English.

Malikshah's letter to Hasan b. as-Sabbah:

O, Hasan b. as-Sabbah, it is surprising that you have invented a new faith and religion and have enticed people into it by various devious means. You have been traitorous to the ruling authority. You have beguiled many brave and simple mountain-folk by exploiting their simple nature and have formed an army of them who, wherever they go, kill innocent people and make them targets of their daggers. Moreover, you revile against the Abbasid Caliphs who are responsible for the maintenance of Islam, of the

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Empire and of the nation and who are the upholders of religion and the State. It is they who are the foundation of the organisation and administration.

You should desist from following this wrong path and become a good Muslim, or else we might be forced to send troops against you. The commencement of this action depends on your own behaviour or upon the receipt of your reply. Keep away from the dangerous policy you are following. Have mercy on your own self and on your followers, and do not unnecessarily hurl them into disaster. Do not let your strong defences at the fortresses deceive you and make you conceited. With this sincere advice, I may add this also very clearly that even if Alamut were one of the fortresses of the heavens, I could level it to the ground by the grace of God.

The reply of Hasan b. as-Sabbah to Malikshah.

When Diya ad-Din Khaqan arrived here and delivered the King's letter, I welcomed him and was grateful for the king's favour. Since the Sultan has graciously addressed a letter to me, it is my duty to put before him all the facts concerning our activities and beliefs, which I hope the Sultan will place before his court for their consideration. I further request the Sultan not to consult in my matter certain amirs and officials, particularly Nizam al-Mulk, whose extremely inimical attitude towards me is well-known.

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After this, if the Sultan arrives at any conclusions, and if they are correct then they would not require any alteration nor would there be any escape from them. If I run away from these conclusions, then it would mean I have run away from Islam and have betrayed the obedience to God and his Prophet. But if the Sultan listens to the slanderous talk of my enemies about me and my work and shows indifference, then I will have full right to persist in my activities, because there are some formidable enemies who never desist from their attempts to make truth look false and falsehood appear as truth. History reveals that such people have many a time achieved success in their nefarious deeds. Even in my case, they have gone to the furthest limits in their machinations and probably this is no secret for the Sultan.

Let me now describe my early career. My father was a true Muslim and belonged to the Shafi'i school of thought. When I was four years old, he sent me to school and I occupied myself in acquiring knowledge. From the 4th year to the 14th, I continued studying, till I mastered many sciences, particularly Qur'anic exegesis and apostolical traditions. Since then, I began taking special interest in religion. In the works of Imam Shafi'i, I found many traditions concerning the high and superior qualities of the descendants of the Prophet and concerning their Imamate, and I was so impressed by them that I kept continuously searching for the Imam of the time.

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However, the repression and tyranny of the rulers drove me to look more for worldly affairs which the common people are so enamoured of. I began losing my attachment for religion and love of the Prophet's Household; and devoted myself wholeheartedly towards the affairs of this world and of its people. Consequently, I forsake my duties towards the Creator. This behaviour of mine improper in the eyes of the Lord, and so He set up enemies against me who manoeuvred to drive me away from my work. Then I used to wander in the towns and jungles and in these wanderings, I was subjected to many hardships and difficulties. The Sultan must be well aware of the dispute and estrangement between Nizam al-Mulk and me. With the grace of God, I remained safe from all the intrigue of Nizam al-Mulk against me. All those absents convinced me of the fact that these were the inescapable results of the attachment to the world and its affairs and the neglect in carrying out the orders of the Creator. Then onwards I engaged myself vigorously in serving religion and improving my position for the next world. From Rayy, I went to Baghdad and stayed there for quite a long time. There, I got acquainted with all the conditions prevailing and with the affairs of the Caliphs. But I found these Abbasid Caliphs, the pontiffs of the Islamic faith far removed from manliness, fairness and honesty as well as from the truth of Islam. I was absolutely convinced that if the foundations of the edifice of religion and faith were these Caliphs and Imams, then heresy and atheism would

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be far better than such faith and religion.

I left Baghdad for Egypt where the Caliph was Imam Mustansir. I inquired into his condition and his claims and I found his caliphate better than that of the Abbasid and I found his Imamate superior to that of the Abbasid and a rightful one. So, I accepted his caliphate and Imamate; and became completely averse to the Abbasid. The Abbasid Caliph, then living, came to know of my ideas and sent troops after me in order to apprehend and imprison me. God saved me from this difficulty also. I got safe refuge in Egypt. But the Abbasids continued inflicting hardships on me. They sent three mules heavily loaded with gold silver, and other goods to the Egyptian Grand Wazir, Amir al-Juyush Badr al-Jamali so that he may arrest me and send me alive to Baghdad or he may kill me and send my head there. But as the rightful Caliph and Imam Mustansir bi'llah was ever kind and thoughtful I was saved from this plot and intrigue. Since the Abbasid Caliph had incited Badr al-Jamali against me and had made him my enemy, the latter manoeuvred to give me missionary work among the Franks. When all this reached the ears of the Imam of the time, he took me in his protection and gave me a document to the effect that I should take up the work of bringing the Muslims on the right path and that I was free to adopt any methods that I chose. I was charged to acquaint the people with the Caliphate, Imamate

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and the divine nature of the Fatimid Caliphs.

In short, if the Sultan understands by the Qur'anic verse: "Obey Allah, the messenger and the people in authority among you" as meaning that the Imam or the rightful Caliph is meant to be obeyed, then he cannot escape from what I say. Just as the Sultan Mahmud Ghazi Sabuktigin was ever ready to conquer a fortress on his behalf defend him so will he be ever-ready to save the Muslims from evil-doing. Otherwise, a time will come when someone else will do this work and get all the good returns for it.

As for the second point of Sultan accusing me of having invented a new religion and faith, then I must say: 'Curse be on Hasan if he has invented a new faith.' The faith which I adhere to is the faith which in the time of the Prophet (may the peace and blessing be on him) was accepted by the companions of the Prophet. This religion is and will be the true one till the Day of Judgment. You know that my religion is the religion of Muslims. I profess that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His messenger' I have no particular fascination for the affairs of this world. Whatever I do or say I do it with absolute sincerity and in the interest of spreading and strengthening the faith. I firmly believe that the descendants of the Prophet are more worthy and capable than the descendants of Abbas in assuming the office of

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Caliphate and in representing the holy Prophet. After them if there are any righteous left, they can be considered worthy of the office. O, Sultan Malikshah how can you tolerate the Abbasids, knowing full well that they have inflicted many hardships on you. How can you see that the kingdom you conquered by your constant campaign from the East to the West and from the northern territories to India be usurped by the sons of Harun ar-Rashid, while your own sons are wandering from place to place. Wherever the Abbasids find your sons, they kill them; while you go on acquiescing in their Caliphate. Abbasids are such people, that if you were to mention even two of their many evil-doings, which you have seen with your own eyes, you would at once say that no man of faith or religion would ever tolerate such actions. It is quite understandable if those people who are not acquainted with their true nature, put confidence in their caliphate; but how can I, who know the ins and outs of their rule ever accept them as rightful caliphs. If the Sultan, knowing well the evil-doings of the Abbasids towards the Muslim community does not take any steps to protect the Muslims from their evil, I wonder how he will answer for this on the Day of Judgement and how will he achieve salvation.

The faith that I have always adhered to I will continue to adhere to it. I shall never shrink from it. I have always revered the four pious

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Caliphs and the ten blessed companions, and will continue to revere them. I have not invented any new religion, but have followed the religion which existed right from the beginning. Neither have I taken a path which had not been traversed before by others. The fact is, as I have mentioned above, that the religion that I follow is the same religion that was followed by the companions of the Prophet. It is the correct religion and shall remain so till the Day of Judgment.

Coming to the second question as to why my followers and I criticise and oppose the Abbasids, I must say that whoever is a true Muslim and is conscious of his faith and sincerity cannot but criticise those people whose career is and shall always remain, from the beginning to the end full of deceit and treachery. In short, their affairs are exposed to the whole world.....

As to the charge against me that I have been inciting simple and straightforward people to kill and raid and to create trouble; I would say that the correctness or otherwise of it can be left to the judgment of fair and impartial people. It is clear to them as well as to all that there is nothing in the world more precious than one's own life. That is why a person does not like to risk his life on anyone's bidding, particularly at the bidding of a poor man like me. Moreover, how can one say that I can think

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of inciting people to kill and be killed, because the real reasons for it, are different and are mentioned in detail below: In Khurasan and its environs the employees, administrators and followers of Nizam al-Mulk and the entire group of officials have given up the correct path of the Muslims who were renowned for their exemplary manners and character. They even indulged in despoiling the honour of Muslim women and of the wives of pious people. They snatched away the wives in front of their husbands. They committed many injustices in the cases that came in their courts. Whenever a person went to any of the big officials or rulers of the country, with his difficulty, he was ungraciously turned down and instead of his complaint being heard, he was made the target for persecution. Nizam al-Mulk was the captain of the ship of state and was in complete control of all its affairs. If ever there was a thorough leadership it was that of his and if ever there was a complete rule, it was that of Abu Nasr. Never at any time has any ruler or commander in any country wielded such an authority in all the matters of state. If ever in any period public monies were misappropriated by the officials, they were either killed or dismissed. But today the rulers encourage the oppressors. There was a time when Khwaja Abu Nasr used to levy a tax of ten dirhems which he used to deposit in the Treasury. On the other hand, this person (i.e. Nizam al-Mulk) exacts fifty dirhems of which he does not spend even half a dirhem in Sultan's

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work. He pays his followers and helps the lowest possible wages and spends the rest entirely on his relatives, his children and his sons-in-law. It is clear that he squanders the wealth of the people on making worthless buildings of brick and sand throughout the length and breadth of the Kingdom. Khwaja Abu Nasr never spent on his children nor wasted the money on sand and clay structures. At that time people's restlessness, helplessness and backwardness were gradually being eliminated, but now the people have no hope of salvation. There is little wonder, if in fact of confusion and desperateness, some of people take upon themselves to destroy the oppressors and to annihilate them entirely. They do not do so passively under someone's dictation, but they have been forced to act by the circumstances. "In time of need, when there is no escape from reality a man does not at all shrink from holding even the sharp edges of the sword."

Why should I interfere in these matters; and why should I ever incite anyone. Everything happens at a particular time and in a particular manner as pre-destined by the Heavens. As for your warning that I should give up my activities or else you will punish me and destroy my stronghold, I must say that I, Hasan, can never be guilty of any act which is displeasing to the Sultan. There is a clique at the Sultan's court which is bent on misrepresenting me and damning me as a criminal in the eyes of the Sultan. I have occupied the fortress in my possession at

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present to make it my retreat and retiring place, and to be able to be of assistance to the Sultan along with other residents of this fortress. After I have completely dealt with my opponents, I shall always present myself at the Sultan's court and shall, like other people, enter into the service of the king, the state and the sultanate. I shall devote myself to the improvement of the material conditions and shall work for the spiritual betterment of the Sultan. If after this I am guilty of doing anything contradictory to the above assurances and if I do not carry out the orders of the Sultan, then I should receive punishment in this world-nay I shall certainly receive it. People will curse me and say that I have revolted against the established authority of the time. They will point out that I have not obeyed the Qur'anic verse: "Obey Allah and His messenger and whoever is in authority from among you." This will greatly strengthen the case of my enemies and opponents against me. Their reputation and prestige will increase. They will be able to concoct all sorts of false and misleading stories about me, of which I would be ignorant. Whatever I will do in the service of faith and Da'wa, they will be able to distort it and brand it as evil and do all they can to condemn me.

If I present myself at the court of the Sultan and in his service while my sworn enemy and intriguer Nizam al-Mulk holds sway there; even in spite of his injustices to me, and if I

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forget all his trickeries and the difficulties which he inflicted on me, even then I shall necessarily have to obey the Abbasids, for the sake of the Sultan, and there shall be no escape from their dictates. The Sultan is well aware of my hatred for the Abbasids and all also of their constant attempts at harming me and arresting me to put me to all kinds of tortures.

Hence, they had me arrested when I reached Egypt. As they could not arrest me on my way, they sent many precious gifts to Badr al-Jamali the Commander-in-Chief of Egypt in order to have me arrested and sent back or to get me killed. If I had not the protection of the true Caliph al-Mustansir bi'llah, I would never have been able to escape from this trouble. The Commander-in-Chief and the Chief Minister Badr al-Jamali however, succeeded in sending me to Syria by sea, so that I may preach among the Franks. They forcibly put me in a ship and made sure that I left Egypt. After many years of difficulties and vicissitudes I managed to reach Iraq.

They still persist in harassing me. Now I have reached a certain stage in the service of the Alid Caliphs and Imams and I maintain the Da'wa on their behalf. I have peace and satisfaction in the fortress-retreats that I have occupied in Tabaristan, Quhistan and Kohistan, where I am surrounded by many a comrade and friend the Partisans of the Alids. The Abbasids are afraid of me on this account. They try their utmost to poison the Sultan's ears against me, make him my

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enemy and through him do me harm or have me killed. They prevent me from having access to the Sultan's court. Under such circumstances one just does not know how to work. However well and completely a task is fulfilled, it is still open to criticism and objections. There are only two alternatives before the Sultan - either to accept their command or not to do so. If he accepts, he will never be able to fulfil them and will become defective in matters of religion and manliness. On the other hand, if he does not accept their commands, some ignorant and petty-minded people who believe in the Caliphate of the Abbasids will criticise him and say that there is no great wisdom in obeying someone in spite of being powerful, for it is just like walking when you have a horse. They will say: 'Was it impossible to have rejected Hasan b.as-Sabbah's case and not to have sided with him?' It is quite probable that the result of all this would be a conflict between the two parties (i.e. between Malikshah and the Abbassids). One can never tell how this conflict will end.

As for the Sultan's saying that even if the fortress of Alamut is one of the fortresses of the Heaven, he would level it to the ground, let me say that the inhabitants of the fortress and the place have complete faith in the people of truth (i.e. the Imams) of the time and have also seen that no one has been able to snatch these fortresses away from them. They believe that the

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safety of the fortress rests on the grace of God. I have been in this fortress-retreat for many years and whatever duties the people have charged me with, I have fulfilled them to their satisfaction. I pray to God, the Almighty and seek the intercession of the Messenger of Allah, so that the Sultan, the administrator, the governors and the officials may be brought to the right path; so that they may lead people to the true religion and themselves accept the right faith. I also pray that they may save the people from the tyranny, oppression and licentiousness of the Abbasids. If the Sultan desires peace and comfort in faith as well as in worldly affairs, he must rise against them as did the Sultan Mahmud Ghazi who had tried to remove their evil. He had called Sayyid Ala al-Mulk from Tirmidh and had entrusted the Caliphate to him. The Sultan must do this in order that their evil-doings may abate. Otherwise, the just king will, one day, reveal himself to fulfil this task and to save the Muslims from tyranny of the Abbasids.

Lastly, I pray that God may guide those who follow the right path.

A seeker after facts, who is not swayed by likes or dislikes, nor influenced by religious or national prejudices, will find in Hasan's activities a movement towards improvement and a revolt against tyranny and dictatorship. Hasan declared his opposition to Badr al-Jamali's conduct and interference in the matter of

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Imamate which was not his concern for he had declared Musta'li as Caliph and had deprived Nizar of his legitimate rights. Consequently, Hasan upheld the Imamate of Nizar and challenged the claims of Musta'li. At the same time, he opposed the existing social order and the tyranny of the Saljuqid Abbasid rulers. Thus, his revolt was twofold; against two powerful authorities, while his Da'wa (mission) was for one small persecuted party. Various hands united against him and devised many ways to oppose him. The enemy used both sword and pen to destroy him. Thus, a dark cloud of repression hid the truth about Hasan from the people. By speech, by action the enemies tried to bring him down. They spread false reports about him. They said that though Hasan was God-fearing and devoted, he was nevertheless a licentious libertine. The reason for these contradictions and confusions is Abbasid propaganda on the one hand and on the other, the absence of any care on the part of Hasan's biographer to verify the facts and events they describe in the light of objective analysis, and their avoiding a critical study which is necessitated by the environments of Hasan under review. As we know, Hasan was born and bred up in a trouble's surroundings and in such a case to know the whole truth about him is very difficult. The biography of Hasan cannot easily be written, particularly by one who is not acquainted with the Isma'ili doctrines and beliefs.

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No claim is made that this study of Hasan is thorough or comprehensive, yet every effort has been made for the proper presentation of his biography, and in referring to many sources in both printed and manuscript form with much care and patience. Like every human endeavour it may be imperfect. God alone is Omniscient.

HASAN B. AS-SABBAH.**His Birth:**

Hasan b. as-Sabbah the celebrated Da'i and clever mathematician was born amidst an atmosphere of turmoil and confusion as we have noticed above. The tradition regarding the date of his birth is much divided. Some say that Hasan was born in 432 H. Other fix the date at 445 H. Ivanow thinks that Hasan must have been born after 444 H. According to him, when Nasir-i-Khusrow after a seven year stay at Egypt returned to Balkh in 444 H. Hasan was most probably not yet born. There is, in short, much difference of opinion about his date of birth, but it seems from the reports of various historians that it was sometime between 430 H. to 440 H.

Parentage and Early Career:

Hasan b. Ali b. Muhammad b. Ja'far b. al-Hasan (or al-Husayn) b. as-Sabbah al-Himyari was from the royal line of the Tubbas of Yaman. He was born in Rayy of Shi'i Ithna Ashari parents. His father was a learned man and was one of the leading theologians of the Twelver Shi'i sect. He had taken special care in the training of his son who took great pains in mastering most of the known sciences of his time, particularly

mathematics, Philosophy and Scholasticism. Ibn al-Athir says: "Hasan b. Sabbah was an intelligent person, proficient in Geometry, Astronomy and magic."

Some historians say that Hasan studied under the Imam Muwaffaq an-Naysaburi and that Nizam al-Mulk and Umar al-Khayyam were fellow-students with him. They add that these three had taken a vow to help each other after they had parted on finishing their studies, and also that if one of them had better luck in life, the other two could demand help from him. It was on this basis, it is said, that 'Umar al-Khayyam went to Nizam al-Mulk when the latter became Wazir of the Saljuqid government, and succeeded in obtaining from him a big yearly pension for life. Hasan also went to him and reminded him of the promise and recited the following verse of the Qur'an: "Abide by the oath taken in the name of Allah. After having emphasised on your faith, do not contradict it." Nizam al-Mulk is said to have offered him one of the Muslim principalities to rule, but Hasan refused and asked for service in the court for he was aspiring for the wazirate. Nizam al-Mulk even tried for that and granted his wish. Hasan thus entered the service of the Saljuqs. Nizam al-Mulk was sincere in his purpose, straightforward in his manner, and always eager to help his friends.

This is obviously an imaginary story invented

by the opponents of Hasan b. as-Sabbah to make it a sort of prelude for damaging his reputation and to derive from it other stories attributing to him heinous deeds and crimes. Nizam al-Mulk was born in 408 H. while Hasan's date of birth as we have seen above was approximately 438 H. This means that Nizam al-Mulk was 30 years old at the time of Hasan's birth. It is not possible that Hasan could have been a fellow-student of Nizam al-Mulk with such a big difference in age. It is quite probable that Nizam al-Mulk entered the political career before Hasan's birth. Ibn al-Athir, speaking of the early career of Nizam al-Mulk says: "He was originally from the village-folk of Tus. His father lost all his property and belonging and his mother died while he was still a nursling. So, his father used to take him round to various nurses for milk and they nourished him till he grew up. As a young man he learned Arabic and God gave him great aptitude for hard work in acquiring knowledge. He studied hard and achieved proficiency. He heard many Ahadith (Apostolic traditions). He, then, entered the service of the Sultans and as time passed by, he rose from rank to rank very rapidly. He toured Khurasan, reached Ghazna with some of his companions and entered the service of Abu Ali b. Shadhan who was in charge of the administration of Balkh on behalf of Da'ud, the father of the Saljuqid Sultan Alp Arslan. He made good progress in this service and was known for his efficiency and honesty. When Abu Ali b. Shadhan died, he mentioned Nizam al-Mulk in his

will to the king Alp Arslan. Upon knowing his career, the latter took him in his service and because of his ability and sound judgment appointed him wazir on his getting the sultanate from his uncle Tughril Beg at the time of the latter's death. When Alp Arslan died, his son Malikshah took his place. This we have discussed in detail before.

It is related alternately that Nizam al-Mulk used to be a secretary to the Amir Tajir the ruler of Balkh. At the beginning of every year, the Amir would call him and take away everything from him. Then he would tell him that he had grown fat and that he did not need anything more than a horse and a whip. When this continued, he hid his sons Fakhru'l-Mulk and Mu'ayyad al-Mulk and escaped to Chughri Bek Da'ud the father of Alp Arslan. On his way the horse stopped. He prayed to God that he wanted such a horse as would take him away from the amir quickly. He had not gone far when he met a Turkoman who had a good horse. He said to Nizam al-Mulk 'Dismount' and the latter did so. The Turkoman took the horse and gave to Nizam al-Mulk saying 'do not forget me, O Hasan' and rode away. Nizam al-Mulk said that he then felt more confident and knew that it was the beginning of his good fortune. He went to Marw and joined the service of Da'ud. Da'ud, introducing him to his son Alp Arslan said: 'This is Hasan at-Tusi; consider him your father and do not oppose him.'

When Amir Tajir heard of the escape of Nizam al-Mulk, he came pursuing him to Marw and told Da'ud: 'This is my secretary and assistant. He has run away with my moneys.' Da'ud asked him to speak to his son Muhammad i.e. Alp Arslan. This Tajir did not like to do; so he went back." It appears from the narration of Ibn al-Athir that the story of Hasan's studies with Nizam al-Mulk is purely imaginary and has been interpolated in books. A clear proof of the falseness of this story is that Hasan makes no mention of it in his letter to Sultan Malikshah. If there was the slightest truth in it, Hasan would have mentioned it in this long letter which is of a biographical nature.

Both the above versions about the early career of Nizam al-Mulk agree that he had joined the service of the Sultans as far back as the time of Daud, the grandfather of Malikshah. On the other hand, the story about Nizam al-Mulk having been a fellow student with Hasan b. as-Sabbah makes him begin his political career in the sultanate of Alp Arslan. If we accept the above two versions then the second story is incorrect; and if this is so then the argument contained in this story that Nizam al-Mulk helped Hasan to join the service of the Saljuqs is also wrong. Therefore, Hasan's entering the Saljuqid service and winning over the confidence of Malikshah were due to his own efforts and qualities and not to the benevolence and patronage of Nizam al-Mulk as it is generally made out.

On the contrary Nizam al-Mulk was jealous of Hasan, because of his vast knowledge of science like Mathematics and because of his ability for administration. It is surprising that the enemies of Hasan have innovated stories which would be damaging to his reputation and which would poison peoples' minds against him.

Nizam al-Mulk saw in Hasan a formidable rival and was afraid of his high position, particularly when Sultan Malikshah was paying more and more attention to Hasan who in return was also eagerly seeking the confidence of the Sultan. Nizam al-Mulk plotted to remove Hasan from the service of the Sultan, so that he may free himself of the horrible nightmare which disturbed his sleep and snatched away his happiness. About Nizam al-Mulk's plot we will say more later.

Nizam al-Mulk, in spite of his excellence, high position, love of learning and the learned was still an intriguer, prone to haughtiness and influence. He loved leadership and fame, aspired for positions of honour and never tolerated a rival. When he detected a rival, he did not abstain from killing him or meting out a similar punishment to him. This was a habit which ultimately led to his downfall, and Malikshah was not unaware of it. The latter finally arranged with Taj al-Mulk to make short shrift of Nizam al-Mulk. He was sick of Nizam al-Mulk's misrepresenting the people to him and of his

dictatorial attitude. He was wearied of Nizamul-Mulk throughout his life, and feared that he might replace him by another king. He used to look at him with fear and notice that the people hated him. Moreover, Nizam al-Mulk had encouraged the sultan to kill his relatives. He always tried to pull down any person who might prove to be more worthy than he.

About this let us reproduce a passage from

K. AN-NUJUM AZ-ZAHIRA:

"Gawhar Khatun, the aunt of Sultan Malikshah as-Saljuqi and sister of sultan Alp Arslan died in 467 H. She was pious and good. On the death of her brother Alp Arslan, Nizam al-Mulk had tried to exact money from her and had in fact taken away much of her wealth. She had gone to Rayy to recruit the Mubarakhi Guards for a fight against Nizam al-Mulk. The latter hinted at Malikshah to do away with her and she was killed. When the news reached Baghdad, people condemned Nizam al-Mulk for it. They said: "Was he not satisfied with building the Nizamiyya Madrasa, with annexing the lands of others and with ruining them that he should have now stained his hands with the blood of a woman?" Nizam al-Mulk had also asked Malikshah to kill his uncle Qarut Bek and to blind his cousins. Actually, the poets of Iraq had criticised Nizam al-Mulk for this in satirical poems."

Apu'l-Mahasin says that Nizam al-Mulk was a

tyrant like the wazirs generally and because of that the best of the divines disliked working in the Nizamiyya Madrasa, and those who did work disliked praying in it. Abu Ishaq al-Firuzabadi ash-Shirazi ash-Shafi'i used to say that most of the furniture and equipment of the Madrasa were misappropriated. This Shaykh used to teach there and whenever it was time for prayers, he would leave the Madrasa and pray in one of the mosques. Abu'l-Muzaffar in this book **al-Mir'at** says that Abu Ishaq was an Imam and theologian, very learned and pious. He was not blamed for anything but his service at the Nizamiyya and teaching there, because his piety and righteousness should not have permitted him to do that.

Nizam al-Mulk to help his own son, tried to run down the wazir Abu Shuja' Zahir ad-Din Muhammad b. Al-Husayn al-Hamadhani in the eyes of the Abbasid Caliph Muqtadi, which resulted in Abu Shuja's dismissal. **Al-Fakhri** has the following information about the wazir: "Abu Shuja was a pious and righteous person, generous and good. He was not affected by losing the wazirate. He withdrew from public life and stayed in Medina looking after the Prophets' mosque, keeping its carpets clean and lamps lit."

Again, the thing that increased the doubts of Sultan Malikshah about his wazir Nizam al-Mulk was the latter's throwing into fire the letters which were written to Qarut Bek. **Abu'l Mahasin** says: "When Malikshah became Sultan his uncle

HASAN B. AS-SABBAH

Qarut Bek opposed him. A battle was fought in which Malikshah took his uncle prisoner. When the prisoner was produced before the Sultan he said: "Your amirs had written to me" and he produced the letters. Malikshah taking them from him gave them to Nizam al-Mulk who there and then, threw them into fire and burnt them. The Amirs were thus relieved (of evidence against them." The letters which Malikshah had given to Nizam al-Mulk to read would have revealed the conspiracy of the amirs to over throw Malikshah by inviting Qarut Bek. Nizam al-Mulk's throwing them into fire was intended to destroy the evidence which might have even involve himself and betrayed him as a traitor.

All this had set Malikshah's heart on fire against his wazir and he planned to kill him with the help of Taj al-Mulk who employed a Daylami servant for the murder. This was in Ramadan 485 H. when he was with Malikshah on way to Baghdad. The people responsible for the murder accused Hasan b. as-Sabbah in order that they may be absolved of any liability. Nizam al-Mulk's supporters and guards, however, came to know of the facts but kept quiet over it and lay in wait for an opportunity. On the occasion arising they killed Taj al-Mulk who had succeeded Nizam al-Mulk in the wazirate, as mentioned before.

The practice of assassination was widespread among the amirs of the Saljuqid Government and

even among the Caliphs and Sultans. They did not hesitate from it. Most of the reports about Malikshah's death state that he had died of poison. It is possible that the person behind the poisoning was none other than the Abbasid Caliph Muqtadi, who most probably employed Taj al-Mulk for the purpose. The latter had previously killed Nizam al-Mulk.

Muqtadi wanted to get rid of Malikshah in order to safeguard his position. It so happened that Malikshah had ordered Muqtadi to leave Baghdad as he wanted to make the town the seat of his own Government. Abu'l-Mahasin says: "In Ramdan 485 H. Malikshah proceeded to Baghdad from Isfahan for a purpose detrimental to the Caliph Muqtadi for he had decided to remove him from Baghdad. Nizam al-Mulk was with the Sultan, and was killed on the way, in the month of Ramadan. Malikshah reached Baghdad on 18th Ramadan. The first thing he did was to call on the Caliph to tell him that he should leave Baghdad and go wherever else he liked. The Caliph was perplexed. He asked the Sultan for a month's respite but the latter refused. The Caliph sent for Taj al-Mulk and told him to ask the Sultan to give him ten days. Taj al-Mulk Abi'l-Ghana'im who was appointed as wazir by Sultan Malikshah after the murder of Nizam al-Mulk, pleaded to the Sultan for him saying that if anyone who wants to travel from one place to another, needs at least ten days for preparation; so why deny

that to the Caliph? Sultan ultimately granted ten days respite, and shortly afterwards Malikshah fell ill and died.

Now, the disease and demise of the Sultan Malikshah immediately after he had asked the Caliph Muqtadi to leave Baghdad raises the suspicion that the cause of Malikshah's death was Muqtadi, who had been warned by the former of expulsion and exile, and who feared losing power and prestige of the Caliphate. It could easily be deduced that Malikshah had died of poison at the hands of his wazir, the conspiring Taj al-Mulk at the behest of the Abbasid Muqtadi who otherwise could not evade Malikshah's order to leave Baghdad, and who therefore resorted to getting rid of him by conspiring against his life with the Sultan's wazir Taj al-Mulk in order to protect his position of caliphate, Taj al-Mulk probably thought that to remove the sultan who was aspiring to control Baghdad the seat of Caliphate, was better than expelling the Caliph from the town of his forefathers, the Abbasid Caliphs and of making light of his awe and dignity as the Caliph of the Muslims. The only thing that had survived for the Caliphate was its outward prestige and if that was also lost, the institution would become contemptible in the eyes of the people.

What strengthens the suspicion of the conspiracy between Taj al-Mulk and the Abbasid Caliph

in murdering the Sultan, is the fact that Taj al-Mulk later attached himself to the service of Turkan Khatun, the mother of Mahmud the infant son of Sultan Malikshah. She was aspiring for power by putting up her son as Sultan after the death of her husband, and by depriving Barkiyaruq, the eldest son of Malikshah and his rightful successor, of the sultanate. He helped Turkan Khatun a great deal and tried his best to increase her efforts to kill Barkiyaruq, for he was thereby aspiring by the help of the Caliph to have for himself an absolute control in the Government of Mahmud who was still not mature enough to understand the affairs of the state. The collaboration of the Caliph and Taj al-Mulk is further evidenced by the fact that while negotiating with Turkan Khatun for the succession of her son Mahmud to the sultanate, the caliph had tried to reserve most of the governmental powers for his accomplice Taj al-Mulk. This we have noticed before. Taj al-Mulk would have succeeded in getting rid of Barkiyaruq were it not for the circumstances that went against him. Nizam al-Mulk's men killed him in revenge for his having killed their master. This also we have related above.

The Conspiracy of Nizam al-Mulk:

Let us return to our narration of Nizam al-Mulk's plot to oust Hasan b. as-Sabbah from the Diwan of Sultan Malikshah. Hasan, as we have

seen, was one of the wazirs in the court of Malikshah. Historians and the biographers of Hasan are all agreed that he was a learned man, a clever politician and a master of mathematics and science. He excelled in administrative and organisational matters of the state. His career was marked with a kind of seriousness. He knew no attraction but work and was apt in fulfilling the tasks assigned to him. Nizam al-Mulk on the other hand was the chief wazir and had control over all the officers in the government. There was no limit to his authority. He occupied this position in the reign of Alp Arslan father of Malikshah. Sultan Malikshah differed from his father in that he took keen interest in the day-to-day work of the various Departments, particularly those of finance which dealt with the income and revenue of the kingdom. His interference in the affairs of state was very much and the Chief Wazir did not like this and tried his best to divert him from it. But the sultan was firm and obstinate. He persisted in his practice and used to summon his wazirs to discuss, question and examine them about these matters. He was particularly impressed by Hasan because of his keen intelligence and stringent discipline. Nizam al-Mulk thought Hasan to be a thorn in his way and was eager to remove him. For this, he used to call him, revile him and threaten him.

It so happened, that the Sultan once asked his chief wazir Nizam al-Mulk to re-organise the State Departments and wanted to know in how

much time he could do it. The wazir suggested two years. The sultan thought it too long and wanted the work done in a shorter time. So, he summoned Hasan and asked him whether he could do this job and in how long a time. Hasan was prepared to do it in forty days. The sultan was astonished and said: "It seems you do not know the working of the governmental departments. The chief wazir wants a longer period to complete the job, than what you suggest." Hasan assured the sultan that the work in question does not require any more than forty days to complete it and that he was ready to guarantee its fulfilment in that period. Sultan was very happy at this and ordered the staff of the Diwan to help Hasan in whatever he wanted of the information and documents. Hasan happily commenced his work with a confidence that he would complete it in the fixed time. Nizam al-Mulk sensed the danger and thought that the wazirate was slipping out of his hands because he was quite aware of the ability of Hasan and his efficiency in the financial matters. He knew at once that Hasan would no doubt be successful and was very perplexed and disappointed. He regretted the fact that the time had come when he would go out of the picture. So, he devised a plan and exploited all the possibilities to keep Hasan away from the wazirate and to put the Sultan and other dignitaries against him. He called one of his trusted servants and asked him to make a good friendship with the favourite servant of Hasan to the extent of intimacy in frivolities; try to gain his confidence and to

satisfy all his desires. He also asked the servant to inform him when he has done that. The servant did what he was ordered. He won the confidence and faith of Hasan's servant entirely.

Hasan was occupying himself in the organisation of the records of revenue and expenditure. He had collected all statistics and necessary information about the different countries of sultanate. The records, at this time, were composed of different papers which were kept separate, not attached to each other. Each page had an amount marked at the top and it contained the accounts of income and expenditure of different provinces under different headings. Nizam al-Mulk came to know that Hasan had completed the arrangement of the records in a very good manner and that he was going to present the completed work to the Sultan. So, at the last moment he ordered the servant mentioned above to steal the files of Hasan and scatter its pages in improper positions and keep them back at their place. The servant did what he was told. When the time came for Hasan to present himself before the sultan, he informed the latter that the work had finished and the records were ready, not knowing that his knowledge and capacity would become the cause of trouble to him and, the instrument of his expulsion at the instigation of one who craved worldly glory. Hasan brought the papers unaware of the fact that they were tempered with and that the hard work that he had put on it had

been brought to naught. The Sultan asked for the accounts of one of the provinces. Hasan tried to refer to the relevant papers but found them missing. Every time the sultan would ask him to show him a paper, Hasan would try to locate it in vain. Sultan's patience was exhausted and he was wild at Hasan. Nizam al-Mulk took advantage of this opportunity which he was impatiently waiting for, and he came to the sultan and said that if he trusted persons who did not even know the difference between the easy and the difficult, and between the possible and the impossible, and if the sultan listened to a mad man who had no knowledge of financial affairs, then he would meet with trickery and deceit. Thus, Nizam al-Mulk began to poison the Sultan's mind; till the latter gave orders for the arrest of Hasan. He would have killed him had it not been for his love for Hasan and his appreciation of the past services. At last Hasan succeeded in escaping to Rayy. His only fault was that he was able and sincere in his work.

SECTION II

HASAN'S CONVERSION TO ISMAILISM:

God has sent the Prophet with the religion of Islam and he preached the unity of God. The Arabs responded to him, embraced his faith, became its sincere believers and fought for it. They threw in their lives and property for its propagation and did not differ in any of its

teachings but accepted them with an implicit faith and conviction. They preached Islam, defended it and did not doubt its validity. They were not confused about what was said in the Qur'an regarding the different attributes of God. Everything was as clear as daylight to them. The attitude remained so throughout the life of the Messenger of Allah and for most of the period of the Pious Caliphate till they mixed with peoples of other creeds and cultures due to the expansion of Islam. Their thought developed from primitive simplicity to scrupulous analysis. The Greek Sciences played a considerable part in transforming their religious unity and single faith into various school of thought like the Rationalists, the followers of the literal meaning of Qur'an, the Ta'limites (i.e. those believing in the necessity of having a teacher of the Age) and the Ash'arites (the Scholastic school founded by the theologian Ash'ari). They would hold controversies on the questions of God, exact nature of His Being, His relation as Creator to the Creation and on the problem of Man versus God. They would make different interpretations, each party trying to prove its contentions to be correct, relying on their particular interpretations of the Qur'an and the Apostolic Traditions. The allegorical expressions of some of the Qur'anic verses and of the Hadith helped them in this. In the Qur'an there are verses which apparently indicate that man is a free agent and he alone is responsible for his actions; for the example the following verses:

"Whoever does even a grain of good will receive its reward and whoever does even a little evil will meet its result.", "God never burdens a soul with anything more than it is capable of; for it, is the benefit of what it has earned, and upon it, the evil of what it has wrought.", "Whoever follows the right path does it for himself and whoever goes astray, goes against himself.". On the other hand, there are verses which indicate that man is not a free agent, but is merely an instrument in the hands of God; as would the following Qur'anic verses suggest:

"Do not say with regard to a thing that you will do it, except that God would will it so. Whomever God guides is rightly-guided and whomever He leads astray is the loser.", "Say; O, God, You are the possessor of the Kingdom. You give it to one whom You like and You snatch it away whenever You so desire. You honour and dishonour as You please. You are the Possessor of good, You are Omnipotent", "And they say: Praise be to God who has guided us rightly. We would not have been so guided, had not God guided us.". There are other verses which are made the basis for anthropomorphic ideas like:

"In His hand is good. And He is Omnipotent", "We will free ourselves for you O two worlds (man and jinn)", "O Iblis, what made you refuse to do obeisance to what I created with my own hands" and "Thy Lord came and the angels were arranged in rows "The Merciful is seated on the throne", "But His hands are spread" etc. Quran also contains verses which give the idea of

absorption in God and the principle of monism and pantheism. These are: "Wherever you turn, you will see the countenance of Allah", and "He is the First and the Last; the Apparent and the Hidden.". Thus, arose in Islam, the schools of philosophy and religious sciences based on the lines of the schools of Antioch and Alexandria. Some like Kindi, Farabi, Ikhwan as-Safa and Ibn Sina tried to reconcile philosophy with religion, while Ghazali, one of the important Ash'arites at times persisted in criticising the Greek ideas and at times tried to reconcile them with his creed. The Hanbalites who by following the strict letter and outward meaning of the Qur'an had pushed themselves to the precipice of anthropomorphism were now rejecting the entire output of the intellectual renaissance particularly of the Mu'atazilite school which were giving preference to reason over positive law in judging reality and morals.

In short, the fourth and the fifth centuries H. had an open forum for religious debates and controversies, particularly in Persia, Syria and Iraq. The question of the Unity or Diversity of existence was the centre of polemics between the various schools of thought. Those who believed in the unity of existence viewed the world of perceptions as phenomena and not the-thing-in-itself. Those who maintained the ideas of the diversity of existence divided it between the Creator and the Creation; gave to the Creator the attribute of knowledge, life, authority,

power, will and intelligence; denied the principle of cause and effect and the immutability of the laws of nature and rejected all the explanations of the philosophers about God. Also, the question of intelligence, knowledge, and life with respect to God was a point of tremendous controversy among the followers of various schools. Such was also the case with the problem of pre-destination and free will; the problem of the eternity or otherwise of the world; the question of Soul, its salvation, perdition, immortality and freedom after its separation from the body, and lastly the question as to who can become the giver of the divine knowledge - a particular person or any person generally. The Imamis maintain that after the Prophet, the Imam can only be the true giver of divine knowledge and be the perfect Guide. From him only can the divine knowledge be received, in order that the trend of thought may become one and the unity of the community be maintained, in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an which says: "Whatever the Prophet gives you, accept it, and avoid all that he prohibits.". The non-Imamis uphold opposite views. To them, the Divine knowledge could be received from any teacher. Thus, the rival schools of thought arose in the Islamic Community and created confusion and doubt in the minds of the intelligentsia in the matter of religion.

Hasan, as we have noted before, was a profound scholar and a man of culture and hence he took

an active part in intellectual discussions. Later he supported the Ithna Ashari school of thought but here also he did not remain long. He doubted its correctness because he was tired waiting for the appearance of the Mahdi-Imam and noticed that the cause of the community was split up between the learned mujtahids each of whom had his own muqallids (followers). The principle of Imamate and that of the unity of faith in a common centre. If the Ulema could have managed without an Imam, they could have done so immediately after the death of the Prophet, and the necessity of an Imam would not have arisen at all. Hasan began to doubt his own beliefs. The philosophers, the Ash'arites and the Mu'atazilites did not appeal to him as they could not agree on anything; could not unite and their ideas would change from time to time. These did not have any definite faith and they formed nothing more than schools of thought. Hasan was, thus, perplexed about his own position and felt a painful void. He did not find any remedy but in entering the service of the Saljuqids, and occupying himself with the work of the Sultan's court. He was overtaken by a mental struggle once again, immediately after he was removed from Sultan Malikshah's service on account of the plot hatched by the Wazir Nizam al-Mulk.

After his hopes in the people of affairs had been frustrated and he began to suspect them, Hasan became strongly inclined to ascetic life

and to the service of the people of the faith. He, then, began his search for the true faith and participated in controversies with people of different schools of thought. Persia at that moment was a stronghold of the Isma'ili Da'wa, and a ground favourable for the activities of the da'is who were spread in all parts of the country preaching their doctrines, contesting their opponents in the field of discussion and always emerging successful. Since the time of the Umayyads these places were the home of the Shi'ite Da'wa, and here Shi'ism thrived and flourished.

As the Isma'ili Da'wa, an offshoot of the Shi'ite movement, was based on a thorough organisation and sound principles it could outshine the Ithna Ashari Shi'a school, oust it from the field of competition and absorb most of the latter's following in its system. The schools of Cairo during the time of the Fatimid Caliphs and the schools of Salamiyya during the period of satr (hiding) of the Isma'ili Imams produced a large number of Da'is who were trained in the art of controversy and were given vast learning and a broad culture. Due to their profound knowledge, doctrines and sincerity for the Imams, they could spread the Isma'ili faith in Tabaristan, Rayy, Khurasan, Transoxiana, Bahrayn, 'Uman and Yaman. Among the da'is that preceded the time of Mahdi and paved the way for the success of the Da'wa in Persia was the famous da'i Khalaf. This da'i who had the gift of gab could win over a large following in Rayy,

Tabaristan and Adharbayjan, particularly the intellectuals. Among the great men of learning who embraced the Isma'ili faith was the da'i Ghiyath who was very active in the Da'wa affairs and who composed many books. He had many polemical conferences with the learned men of other schools. The renown of the da'i Ghiyath spread all over at about the beginning of the reign of Mahdi. People longed to hear him and were attracted to his madhhab. Among the other da'is was Abu Hatim Ma'aruf an-Naysaburi who was the assistant of da'i Ghiyath in the missionary work for the Isma'ili faith. Abu Hatim was one of the great philosophers. He had vast information about the pre-Islamic Bedouin warfare as well as about the Greek philosophy. He was a good poet and was responsible for attracting the amir Husayn b. Ali al-Marwazi to Isma'ilism. This amir was influential and held complete sway over Khurasan, Talqan Herat and the Ghur-country. Consequently, Ismailism spread far and wide in these territories. When Mahdi, the Fatimid declared himself, the activities of Da'is like Abu Hatim ar-Razi, Nasafi and Abu Ya'qub as-Sijistani increased considerably. These three were among the greatest thinker of their time and were formidable barriers against their opponents particularly the atheists, and the Mu'atazilites. Professor Hasan Ibrahim Hasan says: "Abu Hatim was one of the great Isma'ili da'is and declared himself for the Da'wa of the Fatimids. He played an important role in the political events of Tabaristan, Daylam and

particular Isfahan and Rayy till many big people of the State like Asfar b. Shiruyeh and Mardawij joined him. Abu Hatim was mainly responsible for creating contact between Mardawij and the Imam Ubayd Allah (al-Mahdi). These eastern da'is were the envoys of 'Ubayd Allah to the rulers and the peoples of the East."

In short, these da'is made a great contribution towards the spread of the Fatimid Da'wa. Their efforts and the works that they left behind gave rise to great da'is like Ahmad Hamid ad-Din al-Kirmani, the chief Da'i of the Fatimid Hakim bi Amr Allah, the author of many learned works and the head of the Da'wa al-Mu'ayyad fi'd-Din ash-Shirazi the Da'id-Du'at of al-Mustansir bi'llah and the traveller-philosopher-poet Nasir-i-Khusraw whose teachings influenced al-Hasan b. as-Sabbah to a great extent. This intellectual movement in Islam made great progress and carried the torch of knowledge and religious experience far and wide. They led the general renaissance of the 4th & 5th century Hijra.

Hasan clashed with the Isma'illi da'is and had long controversies with them. He admired their ability in the art of polemics and their profound learning, but he deduced from these controversies that the Isma'ilis were a group of philosophers and Mustansir bi'llah was a great thinker. Hasan, however, was not content with having arrived at this conclusion nor with the controversies. He, then, met the Da'i Amir

Darrab who banished from his mind his conjectures about Isma'ilis as a group of philosophers and Mustansir bi'llah as the biggest of these philosophers. The amir sowed in him the seeds of Isma'ili faith. After a great deal of discussion and reflection the Isma'ili doctrines took deep root in Hasan's mind and made him determined to embrace the faith. In the meantime, he fell seriously ill and gave up all hopes of recovering. He began brooding over his disputes with the Isma'ili da'is and repented his slackness in accepting the faith which he thought was the correct one. He also thought that one who dies without having accepted it, would die in falsehood. This fear began to haunt his mind and made him more attracted towards the Fatimid ideals. As soon as he had a little relief, he started learning the Isma'ili doctrines from the da'is Abu Najm as-Sarraaj and Mu'min who gave him a lucid explanation about the Isma'ili principles, their intricacies and their secrets to such an extent that he imbibed perfectly the faith and knew everything about it. Then, Hasan asked Mu'min who was da'i on behalf of Abd al-Malik b. Attash to take an oath from him and admit him in the Isma'ili madhhab. After a long conference (examination) the da'i Mu'min took the oath from Hasan who was animated with love and sincerity **for the Isma'ili madhhab.**

Not long after Hasan's embracing the Ismaili faith, the chief of the Isma'ili Da'wa in Iraq

'Abd al-Malik b. Attash visited Isfahan. 'Abd al-Malik was one of the leaders of the Isma'ili Da'wa and was a great scholar. Ibn al-Athir has said: "Abd al-Malik b. 'Attash was a refined literary personality, had a beautiful handwriting, a quick wit, and a gentle disposition but was absorbed in his love for Isma'ilism." 'Abd al-Malik was very pleased with the idea of Hasan's inclusion in the Isma'ili community. When he knew of his vast knowledge of sciences, his qualities, his adherence to piety, devotion and sincerity and became aware of Hasan's abilities, intelligence and patriotism for the Isma'ili madhhab, he appointed him his agent and gave him a post in the Da'wa after training him in its technique. He then asked him to go to Egypt to meet the Caliph Mustansir and establish contact with the Chief Da'i there in order to imbibe the divine principles and the doctrines of the Da'wa from its original and pure sources. Egypt at that time was the qibla for the da'is.

HASAN IN EGYPT:

Every eminent da'i earnestly desired and had the ambition of visiting the Central Headquarters of the Da'wa. We find that before Hasan's visit, da'is like Hamid ad-Din al-Kirmani, Nasir-i-Khusraw and Mu'yyad fi'd-Din ash-Shirazi had come to Egypt in the hope either of serving at the centre or of being deputed to important positions outside. Hasan's journey seems to have been motivated by similar reasons. He left Rayy

in 467 H. and passed by Isfahan, Adharbayjan, Mosul, Rahba and Syria in his way. In his travels he worked for the extension of the Fatimid Da'wa, propagated the Isma'ili doctrines and helped the da'is who were posted in various sectors. Wherever he went he created followers of the Isma'ili creed and friends of the Fatimid Da'wa. His fame spread far and wide and the news of his glorious deeds reached the farthest limits of the countries. They reached Egypt before he arrived there in 471 H. When he approached Egypt the da'is, Shaykhs and the men of influence came to the frontiers to receive him. The Caliph al-Mustansir bi'llah also welcomed him, honoured his mission, treated him intimately and ordered him to propagate among the people so that they may follow his Imamate.

Ibn al-Athir relates: "Hasan was one of the pupils of Ibn 'Attash, the physician who was in possession of the fortress of Isfahan. Ibn as-Sabbah after leaving that place went round many countries and reached Egypt. The Caliph Mustansir gave him audience, honoured him, bestowed on him much wealth and asked him to preach among the people for his Imamate. Hasan asked him as to who would be the Imam after him. Mustansir replied that it would be his son Nizar."

Hasan remained eighteen months in Egypt enjoying the patronage and favour of his master, the Imam. He studied the principles and doctrines of the Isma'ili madhhab and the tactics of the

Da'wa with the teachers of the Dar ul-Hikma (the Academy of Science) which was in those days the biggest centre of learning and culture in the East as well as the West. Thus did Hasan visit the centres of learning and made contacts with the da'is and the learned. With whomever he discussed he left an impression and a conviction of his merit, far-sightedness and intellectual proficiency, so much so that he gained a high reputation and recognition from all concerned. In spite of all this, however, a sincere Isma'ili was the target of hatred of the wazirs who were craving for dictatorship and for curbing the caliph and his powers. Because of this, a devout Isma'ili, for the sake of his faith and Imam, had to face persecution at the hands of these self-seekers. Hasan consequently came to a clash with this group which was headed by the chief wazir Badr al-Jamali which led to many differences and quarrels and which resulted in the subsequent arrest of Hasan and his imprisonment at Dimyat. The chief cause of the quarrel was that Hasan resented Badr al-Jamali's efforts to change the succession. Al-Mustansir bi'llah had appointed his eldest son Nizar, who had attained the age of maturity to succeed him, and he was much distressed on account of Badr al-Jamali's dictatorial and high-handed behaviour and his interference in the matters of religion. Badr al-Jamali had noticed Nizar's resentment towards him and felt that he was watching his movements of aggrandizement. He was also convinced that if Nizar succeeded his father his position would be in danger and he

would not be able to pass on his office to his descendants. That was the reason why he carried on propaganda in favour of Ahmad al-Musta'li the youngest son of Al-Mustansir bi'llah, among the officials of the state and his supporters, and also in the countries of the Fatimid Empire like Yaman.

Da'wa in Yaman.

While Yaman was subjected to the Abbasid Empire, its people remained inclined to Shism, and when the da'is Abu'l-Qasim al-Hasan b. Farh b al-Hawshab al-Kufi and 'Ali b. al-Fadl al-Yamani came to the country in 268 H. people joined the Isma'ili madhhab in large numbers at their hands. Not a long time had elapsed when the Fatimid Da'wa was well established in Yaman and had won over many converts. Ibn al-Hawshab built a fortress at Mt. La'a. His armies attacked and occupied san'a and much of its surroundings. He died in 302 H. and left his pupil Abu 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas ash-Shawin in charge of the Dawa.

After the death of Abu Allah the headship the Da'wa passed to Yusuf b. Abi-'t-Tifl who was killed by the Abbasid agents. After him Ibn Juftam took over. He was an able leader and successfully put down the attempts of the Abbasids to capture him. He used to correspond with the Fatimid caliph Mu'izz at Egypt and kept him informed of the detailed news about Yaman.

When he died, he was succeeded by 'Abd Allah b. Bishr al-Qutabi in the times of the caliph Aziz. Next came the da'i Muhammad b. Ahmed ash-shaw iri who was followed by Harun b. Muhammad al-Qudami. Harun corresponded with Caliph Hakim b. Amr Allah and one of the letters of the caliph to him is presented in full. He was succeeded by Yusuf b. Ahmad al-Anishah who is alternately called Yusuf b. al-Asad. After he died, Sulayman b. 'Abd Allah al-Rawahi (or az-zawahi) took over the charge of the Da'wa. This da'i was rich, influential and highly patriotic about the Faith. He used his wealth and position in the cause of the Fatimid Da'wa and in the propagation of the Isma'ili faith. Many people joined his faith, including 'Ali b. Muhammad as-Sulayhi, the learned and astute politician, who was the Head of the sulayhid House and who afterwards founded a dynasty. At the time of his death, Sulayman b. Abd Allah al-Rawahi did not find a better person than 'Ali as-Sulayhi to succeed him in the leadership of the Dawa, so he appointed him his successor. 'Ali began to preach secretly among the people, and many responded to his call by accepting his madhhab. when he was well-established in power, he wrote to the Imam al-Mustansir bi'llah asking permission for the declaration of state and sent him many precious gifts and presents.

Sulayhi's prestige rose high because he got the support of the Fatimid Caliph al-Mustansir bi'llah. By 465 H. he occupied almost the whole

of Yaman. Many letters and messages were exchanged between him and Imam al-Mustansir bi'llah. 'Ali was killed in 459 H. on his way to Mecca and was succeeded by his son Ahmad al-Mukarram. Caliph al-Mustansir bi'llah confirmed his succession, but the state-affairs were managed by his wife Arwa bin-Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Ja'far b. Musa as-Sulayhi. She was a great lady, sagacious and shrewd. In 470 H., the year of al-Mu'uayyad fi'd-Din ash-Shirazi's death, Caliph al-Mustansir bi'llah wrote to Mukarram praising Badr al-Jamali, his high position and distinguished services in the cause of the State and the Da'wa. This gave Badr al-Jamali a chance of bolstering up the claims of Musta'li against those of Nizar in the eyes of the Yamanis under the cover of his reputation. Consequently, when Caliph al-Mustansir bi'llah died in 487 H. Al-Afdal b. Badr al-Jamali exiled Nizar the rightful Heir apparent and got the oath taken in the name of Nizar's younger brother Musta'li. He wrote about it to all the countries that were in the Fatimid Empire and by virtue of his absolute authority in the Fatimid Government he succeeded in prevailing upon Arwa, the Sulayhid Queen to accept the claim of Musta'li to the Imamate. Consequently, Arwa invited people to accept the caliphate of Musta'li and contributed in strengthening the Fatimid rule, and remained loyal to it till the accession of Hafiz b. Muhammad b. al-Mustansir billah. The author of an-Nujum az-Zaheria writes: "Hafiz became caliph after the assassination of his cousin Amir.

Amir had died without a male issue and had left a pregnant wife. The Egyptian people were uneasy at this and they said: No one from this dynasty ever dies without leaving a male child who has been duly appointed as successor-Imam. Amir had appointed the child (yet to be born), as caliph, but his wife gave birth to a daughter. The people therefore accepted Hafiz as caliph and the lineage of Amir was ended."

It seems that Amir had no doubt that his child would be a son; so, he had appointed it as caliph before it was born, had also written to the Sulayhid Queen Arwa and had referred to him by the name of Tayyib. Because of this she considered the Caliphate of Hafiz as illegal, declared herself independent of the Egyptian State and propagated the Tayybi Da'wa till she died in 532 H. The Tayybi Da'wa continued to prosper in Yaman till it was put down at the advent of the Ayyubid armies of Salah al-Din in 569 H. Much latter this Da'wa was shifted to India and its followers there are known as Bohoras.

Let us now return to our narrative of Hasan's adherence to the cause of Nizar as opposed to the claims of Musta'li which were advocated by the Yamani Da'wa. Hasan, as we have noted before, had not accepted the Isma'ili madhhab for worldly gains or political ambitions, so that he may try to follow a policy of winning over the favour and goodwill of the ruling

clique and obtain thereby a position in the Government. If Hasan had wished so he had ample opportunity under the Abbasid Empire. He had, on the contrary, entered the Isma'ili faith with the conviction that it was the only means of salvation, and success by the will of God. Hasan began to criticise Badr al-Jamali's politics and condemn his actions. He expected that the Fatimid state should protect the Da'wa and serve the Faith. But when Hasan saw that Badr al-Jamali had made the Da'wa a means of political power and was exploiting the madhhab for the attainment of his political ends, he revolted against him and exposed his designs. Rashid ad-Din, in his book **Jami'at-Tawarikh** says: "In those times Mustansir by appointing his son Nizar had fixed the succession in Egypt while Badr al-Jamali was striving to get Musta'li appointed. Hasan supported the appointment of the first; thus, incurring the wrath of Badr al-Jamali. The latter did not like Mustansir respecting and favouring Hasan. So, he imprisoned him and then exiled him from Egypt". The letter of Hasan to Sultan Malikshah reproduced in the preceding chapter shows that the wazir Nizam al-Mulk was in contact with the chief of the Fatimid State, Badr al-Jamali and that the former had urged the latter to kill Hasan. But Badr al-Jamali could not circumvent the patronage of the Caliph al-Mustansir bi'llah which Hasan enjoyed. However, he succeeded in banishing Hasan from Egypt to the territories of his enemies, so that they could deal with him as

they liked. Badr al-Jamali imprisoned Hasan b. as-Sabbah at Dimyat, indicating to the people who held the same views as Hasan, by this action, that political power was of greater account than religious considerations. Most of the sincere Isma'ilis in Egypt considered Badr al-Jamali's treatment of Hasan as a blow to both the Da'wa and the state. This can be inferred from the fact that when a portion of the prison in which Hasan was, collapsed, the Isma'ilis displayed their happiness and viewed this incident as a miracle of the Imam al-Mustansir bi'llah as well as of his da'i Hasan.

Badr al-Jamali:

Badr al-Jamali was an Armenian slave bought by Jamal ad-Dawla b. Ammar who gave him good training. He was one of the few men who possessed intelligence and determination. Caliph al-Mustansir bi'llah appointed him his representative at Acre (Akko) when the conditions in Egypt deteriorated and the administration was collapsing. Caliph al-Mustansir bi'llah called him to Egypt because of his qualities of determination, courage and resolution. He arrived at Cairo on the night of Wednesday on one of the last days of Jamada I. 466 H. Caliph al-Mustansir bi'llah appointed him as the Head of the administration and he fulfilled his duties well. Peace and prosperity returned to the country. Caliph al-Mustansir bi'llah further made him the Chief Wazir and the

Commander of the Army. Later Badr took charge of Justice and Da'wa. When Hasan b. as-Sabbah came to Egypt and Badr heard of his vast knowledge, intelligent disposition, energy; judgement, and resourcefulness, he feared lest Hasan might contest his hegemony of the Da'wa, for after all he was more qualified for it. Badr wanted to use the Da'wa for altering the political and religious policies that existed and he succeeded in carrying out his plans. He died in 487 H. after seeing that his son Afdal, the father-in-law of Musta'li was appointed wazir in his place.

Hasan's departure from Egypt:

After Hasan escaped from the prison, in the event of its walls collapsing, Badr al-Jamali issued orders exiling him to the Maghrib (N. Africa). Hasan boarded a ship at Alexandria in 467 H. No sooner she had left the shores she was engulfed in a storm. The passengers were struck with fear; their hearts sank and they began to cry and weep, for they were certain that the ship would be wrecked and that they would be drowned. In the midst of all this, Hasan was sitting calm and composed as if he was in his own house. His fellow-passengers were surprised at his calmness, but it gave them a hope of being saved. They gathered round him and asked him the reason for him being so composed in face of the danger. He told them that God, the most Exalted, had assured him a safe passage, in

order that he may be able to complete his mission successfully. Some of the passengers believed him while others did not. However, the ship took them safe to the port of Acre. At that moment all of them fell at Hasan's feet kissing them and asking his blessings; and the whole group joined his madhhab.

A materialist has no faith in the existence of soul nor he believes in the secrets of its powers and when Hasan's story about the saving of the ship is told to him, he explains it as a deception and trick, and considers the fulfilment of the prediction as a mere accident. A man of faith, on the other hand, believes in the existence of soul and its universality. He does not give materialistic explanation to such prophecies as that of Hasan. He is certain that "The believer sees the light of God", as the holy Prophet has said. The powers of man are not limited. The limits are only imposed on him through the physical constitution which restrict the powers of senses in the state of consciousness. On the other hand, in the state of unconsciousness, sleep or trance he can see, hear and smell without physical mediums of eyes, ears and nose respectively. Similarly in case of other senses.

It is same whether a thing is matter or spirit. Whichever is nearer to the spiritual plane is stronger; for example, vapour which is nearer to the spiritual plane as compared to water is

stronger than the latter in its effect. Similarly, man when he moves towards the world of Spirit by virtue of his devotion, expands spiritually and acquires greater psychic and spiritual powers. So much so that he becomes all pervading. The following saying of the Prophet substantiates the above explanation: "O, man, surely I, Allah, When I say to a thing "be; it becomes" Again: "Man continues to draw near Me by means of devotion till I love him and when I love him I become the faculty of his hearing and seeing, and the strength of his hand." Moreover, a verse from the Qur'an describes man as the vicegerent of God on Earth. It is no wonder, then, that man can command high spiritual powers. The modern psychologists recognise this truth about man. Besides this, even the neurotics, sometimes, can possess powers of clairvoyance which help them to foresee things. 'Ali b. Talib, describing the powers of man, says "Thou art the cause of thy disease and the source of thy remedy. In the microcosm of thy small self is reflected the macrocosm of the entire Universe. Thou art the Book and thou art both the Visible and the invisible." Hence the Spiritualist has the power of probing into the future.

It can be asked whether Hasan possessed spiritual powers, and what he predicted to his fellow travellers about the safe arrival of the ship was due to those powers; or whether it was just a result of his self-confidence. It is

incorrect to think that it was a random guess on the part of Hasan as his belief in the future was as profound as his reliance in the present. So, his prediction could not have been a matter of speculation and conjecture.

Hasan, after having met the Imam Mustansir bi'llah, was obsessed by one fixed idea that he was specially made for the fulfilment of his mission and his belief in the Isma'ili faith and in the validity of the Nizari cause was so profound that he thought he would never die until he had completed his sacred task. This, in fact, made him excessively self-confident and self-conscious! Again, the secret of his success, his being a puzzling mystery to his followers as well as to others and his being a strange combination of contradictions all this revealed that Hasan possessed high spiritual powers. Therefore, it appears that this prediction and many others like this which he made later on were associated with either of these two causes.

The stormy winds tossed Hasan's ship on the shores of Syria and he alighted at the port of Acre. Then onwards he toured many towns and countries; studied the economic, social and religious conditions in them, invited the peoples of those territories to accept the Imamate of Mustansir bi'llah al Fatimi and propagated the Isma'ili creed all over. He reached Isfahan in 473 H. and concentrated on the propagation of the Da'wa to Yazd, Kirman,

Tabaristan, Damighan and the rest of Persia. He, then, went to Qazwin and visited the environs of the fortress of Alamut. It is said that he converted the keeper of the fortress to Isma'ilism and the latter yielded the fortress to Hasan on his demand. Hasan thus, occupied Alamut in 483 H. It was, at that time, in a very bad condition, surrounded by swamps and muddy tracts which accounted for the unhealthy atmosphere of the place. The first thing Hasan did was to rebuild the fortress. He got canal and waterways dug and the lands planted with many kinds of fruit-trees and flower-plants of variegated colours and fragrance. He also had corn, vegetables and fodder for cattle grown and spacious, pleasant garden and parks arranged. In short, he transformed that territory into a vegetable paradise on earth in which flourished his followers.

Hasan profited much by his journey to Egypt. The conditions in Egypt compelled him to give up much of his estimation about the Fatimid Caliphate. He had previously thought that the success of the Dawa had strengthened the foundations of the Caliphate and had exalted the position of the Caliph and that the Isma'ili Community was flourishing under the Fatimid empire.

Hasan found himself disillusioned. He could see how weak the Caliphate was and how the affairs of the state were mishandled by the wazirs and leaders who were the enemies of the Ismaili

creed, who ruled dictatorially and grabbed everything that they could lay their hands on. He noted that the social and economic conditions of the people were in a state of utter deterioration. This made him think hard and he began examining ways to improve these conditions. He devised an elaborate plan which he later tried to implement at Alamut.

This was to form a completely Ismaili State headed by the Imam and populated exclusively by the Ismailis, as conceived by the dais of the period of **Satr** who made great efforts towards its achievement. Hasan, thus, tried to reconcile the ideas of the Fatimids and the Qarmatians about an ideal Ismaili state, and to make the Nizari society represent the ideals of the two Ismaili groups.

SECTION III.

Qarmatians and the Nizaris.

About 264 H. the country folk of Kufa accepted the Isma'ili faith at the Hands of Hamdan b. Ash'ath al-Qarmat representative of the da'i Husayn al-Ahwazi who was sent to Kufa by 'Abd Allah b. Maymun or his son Ahmad for the propagation of the Isma'ili Da'wa and for preparing way for the advent of Mahdi. These people had always believed that the Mahdi would appear who would fill the world with justice and equity just as it was filled with oppression and tyranny.

The Isma'ili faith spread in the environs of Kufa where Hamdan Qarmat founded a State. The village of Muhtamabaz was fixed as a refuge for the Isma'ilis. He then levied many religious taxes on his followers. The first tax levied was a dirham per male or female of the community. This was called **Fitra**. The people responded to him. After a short while he levied another tax called **Hijra** which was one dinar per every adult. In justification of this measure, he read the following Qur'anic verse: "Take from their wealth a tax (or alms) in order to purify them and pray for them, for your prayers would do comfort for them. God is all-Hearing, all-Knowing" and said that verse was self-explanatory. The people paid this tax also and co-operated with him; and helped the needy and poor. After another short interval he levied a tax called **Bulgha** which was seven dinars per person, and explained that it was the 'proof' which God has referred to in the verse: "Say: Bring your proof, if you are truthful" and that it was the evidence of one who cared for faith and who wanted to join his 'predecessors' whom God has referred in the verse: "Their predecessors were verily those who had drawn nigh (to God)". He, then, made small pieces of sweets of the size of hazelnuts, which he gave as tokens of blessings to those who paid him seven dinars. He explained to them that it was heavenly food descended to the Imam. He would send to every da'i a hundred Bulgha and would demand from him seven hundred dinars, at the rate of seven dinars per Bulgha.

When his order was well-established, he took the fifth part of everyone's property and income on the grounds of the following Qur'anic verse: "Know, if you take any booty (income), then for God is the fifth part thereof." The people got their belongings valued and surrendered the fifth part of their value in money. Even a woman would contribute one fifth of what she weaves, and every man one fifth of what he earned.

After all this, he imposed on them the **Ulfa** (Union) by which they gathered all their wealth at one place to bring about a complete equality, so that none of them would own more than the other. He recited the following verses of the Qur'an: "Remember the favours of God on you. When you were enemies he made you friends, (joined your hearts) and by his bounty you became brethren." Again: "If you spend all that is in the Earth, yet you will not be able to make them friends. But God has made them friends. Verily He is Mighty, Wise." He made them understand that they did not need property for possession, the entire Earth would be theirs and for no one else but them. He told them. "This is a test for you which I am examining you, so that your work may be known" He asked them to buy weapons and horses. All this was in 276 H.

The da'is would appoint a trustworthy person in every village with whom would be deposited the belongings of all its inhabitants. These belongings included cows, sheep, ornaments and

other property. This person would clothe the naked and spend on all of the inhabitants according to their needs. The poor, needy or weak disappeared from their society. Every man worked with enthusiasm and zeal. A woman would earn by way of weaving and even children by scaring away birds. They would give the person in charge of property everything they possessed and nothing but sword would remain with them. The da'i would then, say that the knowledge of truth was above every other thing and this knowledge was the recognition of the Imam al-Mahdi Muhammad b. Isma'il b Ja'far as-Sadiq who was the master of Time. And would return to establish truth. He would also say that the Baya, (or the oath of allegiance) which he or any other da'i took was on behalf of the Imam. When the da'i (Hamdan Qarmat) completed his work, he sent his representatives to many places. Ibn Abi al-Fawaris to Yaman, Abi Sa'id al-Hasan b. Bahram al-Jannabi to Bahrayn and so on. They were asked to set up in their sphere of activity states on the model of Hamdan Qarmat's state of Kufa, i.e. based on the Ulfa system. A detailed description of this is contained in Nasir-i-Khusraw's Safar Namah.

Hamdan Qarmat and his disciple Abdan continued in their friendship and support for the Fatimid Da'wa till the year when they broke away from Abd Allah al-Mahdi and repudiated his claims of being the rightful Mahdi thinking that the true Mahdi is Muhammad b. Isma'il who was awaited as the master of the Time. They did not heed his

arguments that the Mahdi whom they expected would not be Muhammad b. Isma'il himself but would be one of his descendants, even though the former was the Imam who went into concealment and was called Muhammad al-Maktum (the 'hidden'). He added that Muhammad b. Isma'il had died in 197 H. and was succeeded by his son, the Imam Abd Allah known as Ahmad al-Wafi who made a nass on his son Ahmad known as Muhammad at-Taqi, who in turn appointed his son Imam Husayn known as Abd Allah or-Radi. The last named passed on the Imamate to his son Abd Allah al-Mahdi. These Imams are known as the Imams of the period of Concealment (satr) which lasted from the time of Muhammad b. Isma'il until the advent of Mahdi. These arguments did not satisfy Hamdan and Abdan who could not reconcile themselves to this sudden change which made their position in the Da'wa awkward, for they had all the while preached to the people in the name of Muhammad b. Ismail, and they could not at the last moment change over to the Da'wa of Abd Allah al-Mahdi or others whose names they had not heard till then. Consequently, they cut off their Kufan Da'wa from the official Fatimid Da'wa and wrote to their da'is informing them about the split. Those da'is who were of a similar way of thinking took the opportunity and broke away. Such was also the case of Ali b. al-Fadl the colleague of Ibn al-Hawshab in Yaman, who declared the Da'wa in his own name and perpetrated many excesses until he perished. Again, there was Abu Sa'id al-Jannabi who though

broke away from the Fatimids, yet he continued to uphold the Mahdship of Muhammad b. Ismail' thus, he wanted to establish himself independently and pass on the rule to his descendants. He doubled his efforts in the propagation of his ideas in Ahsa, Qatif, Bahrayn and the surrounding territories. The Ithna'Ashari da'is of later days took advantage of the same ideas in converting the inhabitants of those countries from one shii faith to another without any difficulty for the idea of Mahdi had established a thorough hold on the minds of the people of Bahrayn and that was one of the cardinal principles of the Ithna Ashari Shi'a. Moreover, the name of the Mahdi with both the sects was considered to be Muhammad. It is for this reason that the whole population was easily converted to Ithna Asharism while their ways and habits remain Qarmatian to this day.

In short, the Mahdship of Abd Allah al-Mahdi remained doubtful in the minds of Hamdan Qarmat and Abdan and they decided to consider it false. This mistake arose due to two reasons **First:** From the time of Muhammad b. Isma'il to the rise of Mahdi, intense secrecy was observed and a clever guise adopted by the Hujjas for their Imams by exchanging their names with those of the Imams. This led to shrouding the personality of the Imams in such obscurity that only a few Hujjas on intimate terms with them knew their identity at Salamiyya. It should be remembered that even the chief da'is in various jaziras

differed in their knowledge of the names of the Imams and did not know for certain as to who the Imam of the time was. As for the converts they would not know any higher authority by name except the da'i to whom they had given their allegiance. Even the correspondence that was exchanged between Salamiyya and the different jaziras was done by the Hujjas. The Imam would under no circumstances ever openly or directly contact the leaders of the Da'wa. It was therefore not possible that the matter of Imamate could at all be understood by Qarmatian peasants of Kufa. That was the reason why they continued to believe in the Madhiship of Muhammad b. Isma'l, as the awaited Imam of the time who had gone into hiding and was the same person who was expected to appear. Such were the explanations of Hamdan Qarmat, which we have noticed before. When Hamdan and Abdan were told that Abd Allah was the expected Mahdi they were surprised and failed to understand the secret of this sudden change. **Second:** The second reason for the Qarmatian misunderstanding was the political differences which the Mahdi encountered in his government. He tried to follow a policy of toleration to the various divergent religious systems and political ideas in place of the policy followed by the earlier da'is which was to form a completely Isma'ili government which comprised of no other madhhab but Ismaili. They had emphasised Batin as opposed to zahir and wanted to enforce equality and community of property as we have seen in

connection with Hamdan Qarmat's government in Mahtamadbaz in the suburbs of Kufa, or of Abu Said's government in al-Ahsa. Nasiri-Khusraw in his **Safar Namah** says: "Asha constitutes a city as well as a country. It has a fortress surrounded by four strong walls, firmly constructed by bricks, each wall being at a distance of a parasang from the other. In the town were big springs of water and the people of the place called themselves Abu Sa'diyyin after Abu Sa'id al-Jannabi. They neither prayed nor observed fasts but would uphold the Prophethood of Muhammad (may the prayers and peace of Allah be on him) and his Messengership and were awaiting the return of Abu Sa'id al-Janabi whom they considered their Mahdi. The wealth of the country was in the possession of the government which would spend on the subjects and would give them food and clothing. It would allot a type of work which was suited to each individual and would look after the improvement of agriculture, the construction of the town etc.

These measures remind us of the Shi'a of the time of 'Ali b. Abi Talib headed by the pious companion of the Prophet, Abu Dhar al-Ghaffari who propagated socialism. Abu Dhar would hold meetings in the mosques during the time of the Caliph Uthman and would preach to the people denouncing the rich who did not spend their wealth in the name of God, demanding their equality with the poor and threatening them with the verses of the Qur'an like: "They treasure

gold and silver and do not spend in the way of Allah; so warn them of a painful punishment on a day when fire will blaze in the Hell and with it will be branded their foreheads, sides and backs. (They would be told:) this is what you have treasured for yourself; so taste what you have gathered." Abu Dhar at last perished at the hands of Bani Ummaya. When Ali b. Abi Talib succeeded to the Caliphate the pupils of his friend and follower Abu Dhar al-Ghaffari gathered round him declared war on Mu'awiya b. Abi Sufyan. After Ali's death they joined Hasan's party and continued to fight against the Umayyads.

When Hasan abdicated from his Caliphate in favour of his opponent Mu'awiya, the extremist Shi'a resented it very much so did Husayn and Abd Allah b. Ja'far b. Abi Talib. They blamed Hasan and called him disgrace to the believers." They gathered round Husayn and refused to give the oath of allegiance to Mu'awiya willingly. Other Shi'a gave their oath to Mu'awiya together with Hasan and entrusted the rule to him. When Yazid b. Mu'awiya succeeded to the Caliphate they revolted against him but were defeated in their armed insurrection. They now went underground formed secret organisations and spread their da'is throughout the Umayyad Empire, particularly in Persia.

This secret movement against the Umayyads gathered strength because of the Umayyad policy

of **exhaustion** and discrimination towards the non-Arab Muslim peoples, who could not have a position of equality with the Arabs in the Islamic society in spite of their superiority in culture and civilisation. These non-Arabs supported the movement which got its recruits from the religiously conscious Arabs as well as non-Arabs. It became so strong that under the leadership of the Persian commander Abu muslim al-Khurasani it could overthrow the Umayyad dynasty and Empire in the year 132 H.

Because the Da'wa was in favour of the Hashimids generally as against the Umayyads, the Abbasids could take advantage of the situation to seize power. They not only kept the Alids away from it, but indulged in persecution. The Shi'a therefore declared war on the Abbasids as they had done previously against the Umayyads but were defeated. The Shite leader Muhammad b. Abd Allah known as an-Nafs az-Zakiyya' (the Pure Soul) was killed and his head was brought to the Abbasid al-Mansur in 145 H. This was a signal of warning to the Alids and their supporters of the commencement of a long era of persecution compared to which the persecution during the Umayyad period would pale into insignificance.

On the death of Ja'far as-Sadiq, the Shi'a were divided into two sections. One upheld the Imamate of the younger son Musa al-Kazim and were later called the "Ithna Ashari Shi'a, other section followed the elder son of Ja'far,

Isma'il and after him were called the "Isma'ilis."

Most of those who joined Musa's group were sick of fighting and had despaired of victory. They submitted to persecution and their shi'ite patriotism was dying out. They were favourably disposed to Musa al-Kazim's policy of appeasement and peace towards the Abbasids just as the earlier Shi'a had demanded an understanding with Mu'awiya before Hasan abdicated. Now they submitted to the tyrannical rule of the Abbasids. The followers of Isma'il, on the other hand, were the real revolutionary Shi'a like those who had previously been Husayn's followers, and they organised a secret movement directed against the Abbasid throne.

The 'period of concealment' (of the Imams) from the time of Isma'il and his son Muhammad to the time of Mahdi, was one of the most significant periods in the history of Ismailism. The da'is of the period had striven hard to create strong foundations for the Fatimid Government which was ultimately established; but once the new state began to settle down, their unity was broken and they began to argue about the meaning of the hadith: When our Qa'im (Mahdi) appears, God will fill the Earth with justice and equity just as it is filled with tyranny and oppression. A group of them held that the substance of the above hadith was that a beginning should be made to improve the social and economic condition of

the Society before establishing an 'Alid dynasty so that the believers may be prompted to seek faith, benefit by the presence of the Imam amongst them and receive the good of both the worlds - there as well as the Hereafter. The rival group to these da'is argued that this line of thinking only places the position of the material life high above the position of the spiritual one, and that the precedents of the Prophets and the pious people do not support it. They added that it was never heard that God had changed the social and economic condition of the society before sending a Prophet to them so that they may enhance their faith; but that the case was to the contrary. God had sent His Prophets to different nations to teach them religion and at the same time improve their social and economic condition. Arguing thus, they held that the establishment of an Alid state and the appearance of the Mahdi were conditions precedent to any consequent improvements in society

Thus, a difference arose amongst the da'is in the matter of giving preference to one point of their programme over the other. Firuz, the Bab al-Abwab of al-Mahdi, Abu Abd Allah ash-Shi'i, his brother Abu'l-Abbas, Hamdan Qarmat, Abdan, Ali b. al-Fadi and Abu Sa'id al-Jannabi preferred the improvement of social and economic condition to precede the establishment of the Fatimid state; while Ibn al-Hawshab, the master of Yaman, Nasafi, Razi, Sijistani and other da'is opposed the first group and held that the

setting up of the Fatimid rule should have precedence over everything else. The difference arose on preference, though both the groups believed in the necessity of having an Imam and in the improvement of the condition of the Isma'ili society.

Both these factions tended to become more emphatic of their points of view till the chasm of difference between them became unbridgeable. Both formed states conforming to their own ideas. The Qarmatians set up their states in Kufa, Bahrayn and Yaman while their rivals the Fatimids set up states in the Maghrib, Yaman and Egypt. The success of the Fatimids was greater than that of the Qarmatians. Their regime flourished in Egypt and their authority spread far and wide. But later in the time of the Caliph Hakim, some da'is headed by Hamza ad-Darazi backslided and separated from the main Isma'ili fold. They declared the divinity of Hakim as opposed to those who believed just in his caliphate. They set up a society in Syria on the model of the previous Qarmatian state and it continues to exist as such till the present day.

From the above account it will be seen that socialism was first originated in Islam by the companion of the Prophet Abu Dhar al-Ghaffari; but as Hamdan Qarmat for the first time established a socialist state, every subsequent socialist movement came to be connected with his name. Then onward the word "Qarmatian" meaning 'red' became the symbol of the socialists among

the Muslims. Perhaps the origin of the adjective 'red' for the socialists comes from the word 'Qirmat', for Hamdan was known by that name and 'Qirmat' comes from the Persian word 'Qirmiz' meaning 'red'. The reason for Hamdan having the appellation 'Qirmat' was that he was red in colour. It will not be farfetched to maintain that the association of the red colour with the socialist movements comes from Qarmatianism.

Hasan made a thorough study of these changes and tried to discover in them points of weakness and strength, of truth as well as falsehood. He considered the Qarmatian desertion from the cause of the Imam of the time and their abrogation of the Shari'a as well as the Druzes' refusal to accept the Imamate of Zahir and their finalisation of the line of Imamate in Hakim as blame-worthy. But he followed their social and economic reforms very minutely in building up his new state of Alamut. Thus, the Nizari society became a combination of the best points of both the above Isma'ili groups.

Hasan as Hujja in Persia and Khurasan.

We have seen above that Imam Mustansir bi'llah appointed Hasan as the Hujja in Khurasan and Persia and ordered him to maintain a Da'wa there on behalf of himself and after him of his son Nizar. Hasan, accordingly formulated his programme and sent his da'is to Persia, Khurasan, the Daylam-country and the areas where various fortresses and castles were situated. He

himself toured different places with a group of da'is propagating the cause of Imam Mustansir bi'llah and his heir-apparent Nizar. He, however, knew that the progress of Isma'ilism in Persia was not easy and its way was beset with many difficulties and dangers, particularly when Nizam al-Mulk was searching for him. Nizam al-Mulk had sent his agents all over Persia and Khurasan in order to arrest Hasan or kill him. He had written to governors of all the provinces, particularly to Abu Muslim, the governor of Rayy, who was his son-in-law, to hunt down Hasan or kill him. Hence it became necessary for Hasan to find out unapproachable retreats which would protect him from the enemies and prevent them from doing him harm so that he might be able to execute his important plans. Persia, in those days, on account of its division into various feudal states and because of its disturbed political and social conditions, made itself attractive to the adventure-loving people. The north-western province between Daylam and Iraq was punctuated with many lofty and inaccessible castles situated in rugged hills which could give a good opportunity to their possessor to spread his authority and power over the entire province. Hasan directed his attention to this province and the more he pondered over one of these castles the more he thought of making it the headquarters of the chief of the Isma'ili Da'wa. Thus, after nine difficult years of restlessness, severity, hard-work and widespread

propaganda he succeeded in occupying the fortress of Alamut. This we have discussed above. Hasan's occupation of Alamut proved auspicious to the Isma'ilis for after that they embarked on many victories and could occupy the fortresses of Shah Dizh, Khalanjan near Isfahan, Tabas, Tun, Qa'iu, Zawazn, Khur, Khusaf in Quhistan, Wahmkuh near Abhar, Ustunawand in Mazndaran, Ardahan, Gird-i-kuh, Qil'at an-Nadhir in Khurasan, Qil'at at-Tanbur near Arrajan and Qil'at Khallad khan in Fars.

"Hasan's differences with the later Fatimids and the organisation of the Nizari society:"

Hasan propagated the Imamate of al-Mustansir bi'llah, the 8th Fatimid Caliph and after the latter's death in 487H. he and his men separated from the cause of Musta'li and his Caliphate and continued the Da'wa on behalf of Nizar, the rightful successor of Mustansir bi'llah. Egypt had a big Isma'ili community which supported Hasan's stand on the correctness of Nizar's Imamate and the falsity of Musta'li's claims. When Musta'li came to the Caliphal-throne and killed his brother Nizar, one of 'Hasan's followers escaped from Egypt with the son and successor of Nizar, Ali al-Hadi to Hasan's retreat in Persia. Hasan was very pleased, for he now hoped to form a purely Isma'ili state based on the good points of the Fatimids in so far as the leadership of the Imam was concerned and of the Qarmatians in so far as the economic and social organisation was concerned. Hasan was

perfectly confident in his beliefs, and began gathering round him people who like himself possessed unswerving faith; who even could sacrifice themselves for the defence of their faith and who would not succumb to temptations. He was thoroughly successful in this when he recruited to his society a group of men who were in the service of Malikshah and his governors. They proved to be of great help to him in expanding the sphere of influence of the Isma'ili Da'wa in those territories and in warding off many an atrocity directed by the Saljuqids towards Hasan's community. One such supporter of Hasan was the ruler of Rayy, al-Amir Muzaffar who was later on killed by the Saljuqids.

Hasan was not a mere academic person who restricted himself to only a religious Da'wa and sufistic ideals and who would keep religion away from practical life in order to retire into mystical experiences. Hasan did not hold the common belief that religion is a mere relation between the devotee and his Lord and it has nothing to do with social, economic or political affairs and the problems of life or that it is meant only to elevate the spirit and refine his spiritual consciousness or again that it drives one to heavenly aspirations in the world of idealism and imagination leaving aside society to be ruled by the men of affairs according to their self-interests and personal consideration. On the other hand, Hasan was a practical man and

expected to attain through religion his spiritual and material needs. Religion, in his opinion, was strong factor in all the affairs of life; it could not only purify the soul and elevate the spirit but could also help in the social, economic and political matters. Accordingly, he wanted the ruler as well as the ruled to be from one society, holding the same creed and having a common driving force in their cultural, economic and political life; every individual would be an integral part of the society and the society itself would be united and well-knit with its individuals. On this principle did Hasan shape his society which after 488 H. came to be known as the Nizari community as distinguished from the following of Musta'li the youngest brother of Nizar.

SECTION IV.

Religious Teachings of Hasan:

After Hasan established himself in the fortress of Alamut, he began organising his society and indoctrinating them in the Isma'ili religion teaching them its principles and inculcating in them obedience to the infallible Imam, his Hujja and the religious dignitaries. He explained to them that Islam was a religion of Unity and the meaning of Unity was the faith of the community in One God and the Prophethood of Muhammad and in the Imamate of the Imam of the Time, as God has said: "Obey God and obey the messenger and

The people in authority among you." This is the charm of Unity or the 'rope of Allah' about which we read in the Qur'an: "Hold fast to the rope of Allah and do not separate." Those who do not stick fast to this rope cannot save themselves from split. Again, those who proclaim the Unity of God but do not accept the Prophethood of Muhammad cannot be called Muslims and those who declare the Unity of God as well as the Prophethood of Muhammad, but not believe in the Imamate of the Imam of the Time fall into dissension and waywardness because God has made the religious system on the pattern of the system of creation. He has made for all a centre which protects them from disturbance and disorder. As he has made the sun the centre of the solar system so he has made the Imam of the Time after the Prophet a centre that guards the system of the community. Since God made the religion, He sent His Prophet to propagate it and establish it among the people. He did not leave any matter of religion to be decided by the people. Hence the Qur'anic verse: When God and his messenger decide a thing, it is not for the believer, man or woman to have a choice against it. Whoever disobeys God and His messenger, clearly falls into misguidance." It therefore, stands to reason that God would not leave the affairs of religion unguided after the Prophet; but would appoint a person to teach religion and establish His cause among the succeeding generations. Religion cannot and

should not be accepted from anyone but a true Teacher; and such a true Teacher is the Imam.

In refutation of the rationalists, Hasan said: "To a seeker after the knowledge of God, one of the following two conditions would apply - either he seeks God by his own reason without resorting to the instruction of a Teacher, or he tries to achieve the knowledge of God, in spite of his reason and intelligence by the guidance of a true Teacher. One who follows the former way cannot deny the reasoning of others. When a person denies a thing, his denial implies knowledge of that thing and the knowledge is evidence of teaching. Teaching in turn can be derived only from a Teacher. Two alternatives are inescapable: One who makes a decision or says anything does so either on his own or by the help of another. Similarly, one who believes does so either himself or by the instrumentality of someone else."

In refutation of the Ahl al-Hadith, Hasan said; "If the necessity of teaching is accepted, the question arises whether any teacher is good enough or whether the true teacher is essential? One who maintains that any teacher is acceptable, cannot reject the teachings of any of the teachers who are opposed to each other in their views. On the other hand, one who denies that any teacher could be acceptable, agrees to only one true and trustworthy teacher."

In refutation of the Shi'a, Hasan said: "When the necessity of a true teacher is accepted, is it not desirable first to seek the teacher and be successful in it, or is it permissible to follow any teacher without ascertaining his identity or verifying his teachings? The second proposition leads to the first. A person cannot trail a path without a leader or a comrade. So, a comrade must always precede the journey". Hasan also said: "In the world, there is truth as well as falsehood. The criterion of truth is unity while that of falsehood is disunity. Unity can be obtained through the principle of teaching; while disunity results from reasoning. The principle of teaching is the basis of a consensus of opinion which is created by the belief in one Imam in every period. Reasoning results in different schools of thought which in their turn are identified with their leading exponents." He added: "Due to necessity we knew Imam, and through Imam we realise our needs even as through creation we realise the creator."

Hasan would prevent the rank and file of his disciples from going deep into the mysteries of the sciences, particularly in metaphysics, just as he would prevent the initiates from a study of the advanced books on dialectics and philosophy except after verifying the soundness of the authors' beliefs.

These, then, are the religious teachings of Hasan and the basis of them, as noted is the knowledge of the Imam of the time and the

acquisition of faith from him and from none else as the following Qur'anic verse indicates: "Accept whatever the Messenger gives you and abstain from whatever he prohibits you from." Hasan believed that if religion is acquired from any person other than the Imam, dissensions would arise; and dissensions would lead to disunity in the matter of religion. God had freed His Prophet from those who disputed in the matter of religion, for the Qur'an clearly states: "With those who differentiate in their religion and become partisans, you have nothing in common". Hasan did not dabble in the question of God and the Divine attributes, which he thought to be above reason and understanding, for God, the Exalted is too Great for being a subject for knowledge. Hasan's doctrines about God were simple and did not go beyond his saying: "Our God is the God of Muhammad. It is He who has sent the messenger with guidance and the messenger is he who guides us towards Him." He would challenge one who argued in the question of God with his reasoning and with one who made Him the subject of polemics. He used to say: "Reason cannot lead to his knowledge, because if it could then the Prophets and Imams about whom we read in the Holy Qur'an: "We have made them Imams to guide by Our order", would have been superfluous."

People accepted the teachings of Hasan on account of their being simple and clear. His madhab became widespread and a large public was attracted towards it in spite of the efforts of

his enemies to nullify it by various means. His influence spread, his position became exalted and his enemies were overawed.

Hasan did not stop at the religious training of his men but devoted himself to improving their social and economic condition. He assigned to them work according to their capacity. A group of people who were known for their bravery and bodily strength were made to carry arms, and from them Hasan created an Isma'ili garrison or an army of the Fida'is. A section of the Ulema were made da'is. From other sections were recruited merchants, workers, peasants, artisans, craftsmen and so on. Every section of the community specialised in work which suited it, and the whole community was bound together by ties of friendship, brotherhood and equality; so much so that every individual felt himself a responsible part in-separable from the society. This was a matter which made the Nizari society a strong united group, capable of withstanding the enemy, however powerful he may be. It stood by its obligations admirably. Poverty, weakness and misery were eradicated. Peace, prosperity and happiness became a general rule. Thus, Hasan succeeded in forming a purely Isma'ili state under the authority of the Imam and under a wazirate like that of himself, and thus released the ideal Isma'ili state.

The Word "Assassin" and its derivation:

Hasan's followers are known in history as the Fida'is or the Assassins. Historians do not differ about the origin of the word 'Fida'i' which they say is derived from Fida, i.e. to redeem a thing by money or something else as they differ in the derivation of the word "Assassins".

As for the appellation "Assassins" which was given to the Isma'ilis, the western as well as the eastern writers have differed much about its derivation. Some say, it is derived from "Hasaniyin" i.e. the followers of Hasan. Others including the compiler of the Encyclopaedia of Islam (Bustani) maintain that it is derived from the word "al-'Assasin" meaning 'guards', arguing that the followers of Hasan acted during peacetime as protectors of towns from thieves. Still others think that the word is derived from "Shahinshah". Many writers hold that "assassins" had evolved from "Hashshashin" meaning the addicts of the greenish intoxicating drug known as hashish. They based their theory on the presumption that Hasan used it for exciting the spirits of his fighters at the time of crisis. Some writers suggest that the word in question is a corrupted form of "Hassasin" which is derived from the verb "Hassa" i.e. to eliminate by killing. Hence the European usage "to assassinate" meaning "to kill". This usage became common in European languages after the

crusades. Many other equally impossible theories have been advanced about the word "assassin". The followers of Hasan earned the name 'Fida'is' on account of their bravery and dash in sacrificing themselves to save their religion from the onslaught of the Saljuqids who spared no efforts to wipe out every trace of Ismailism from the Earth. As for the appellation "Assassins", I am inclined to believe that it comes from "Asasin", the name which was given to the community on account of their belief in Asas, that is the Imam. That is perhaps nearer to truth than any other explanation, for it does not involve any forced etymological derivation and explanation. Asas means Imam and Asasi means one who follows the Asas, just as Hanafi, Maliki or Hanbali signify those that follow the schools of Abu Hanifa, ash-Shafi'i, Malik and of Ahmad ibn Hanbal respectively, if there was any veracity in the assertions of the writers, they would not have fallen out in this manner in their explanations. If Hasan's followers were called "Hashshiyin" or "Assasin" or "Hasanyin" or "Hassasin" there would not have been any ambiguity about the meaning of the word in the minds of the writers - eastern as well as western, because the above words are quite clear. Ambiguity arises in case of unfamiliar or unusual words, but there cannot be any unfamiliarity or unusualness about the above words. Because the expression "Asas" is one of the peculiar Isma'ili religious terms, it was difficult for the historians to grasp properly its meaning. So, they devised all kinds of

explanations and every group put its own interpretation on it. We know that the Isma'ilis closely guarded the secrets of their religion and the technical terms of their madhhab. It is therefore not surprising that the expression "Asas" remained unknown to those historians; and it is for this reason that they became so confused about the explanation of the term "Assassins". Perhaps those who knew the Isma'ili terms after the Isma'ili manuscripts had come to light, were also taken in the battle of ideas to support those writers, particularly to satisfy their prejudice about Hasan and agree to those view-points of the writers which betrayed weakness, defect and enmity for Hasan and his madhhab. I am of the opinion that if people patiently study the Isma'ili faith and inform themselves of its terminology the whole matter will become absolutely clear and they will acknowledge the correctness of our contention, particularly when it is realised that the principles of Natiq and Asas are considered the fundamental doctrines of Isma'ilism. Isma'ilis describe a Prophet as Natiq and an Imam as Asas. Natiq and Asas are the pillars of the Isma'ili system of thought. They are also alternatively known as 'Aql (Intelligence) and Nafs (Soul), or as Qalam (Pen) and Lawh Tablet or as Rahman (beneficent) and Rahim (Merciful). Nasafi a celebrated Isma'ili da'i writes in one of his books, explaining the meaning of **Basmala**, that it is composed of four words referring to the beautiful names of Allah, which in the language

of Haqa'iq (philosophy) are 'Aql and Nafs, in the language of Tanzil (Revelation) are Nabi (Prophet) and Imam, and in the language of Da'wa are Natiq (Exponent of Shari'a) and Asas (Interpreter of Shari'a). Hence in Bismi'llah, the first two words of the formula refer to Aql and Nafs in the spiritual world and Rahman and Rahim in the world of religion. Tawhid (Unity) according to the Isma'ilis, as we have seen in the teachings of Hasan, is the faith in God, in the Prophethood of Muhammad who is the Natiq and in the Imamate of the Imam of the time who is the Asas.

According to the Isma'ilis, after the death of the Prophet i.e. Natiq, the Imam combines in himself the offices of the Natiq and the Asas. One who does not know the Asas or the Imam of the time falls into doubt and differences and consequently goes astray. The Prophet has said: One who dies without knowing the Imam of the time, dies a death of Jahilliyya". In short, the Asas or the Imam is an important position, around which revolve the Isma'ili doctrines. The Isma'ili scholars have written many books for proving the Imamate and about the principle of Asas, from which a few extracts are reproduced below: Naysaburi in his **Risalat-al-Imama** has said: "Imamate is the pivot of faith and its asas (foundation) and round it revolve the entire affairs of religion and world, of the Hereafter and of this Existence. It is responsible for discipline of the believers, for the building of the social order, for the

rewards in the world of Return. With it one can attain the knowledge of Unity and messenger ship with argument and discussion about Shari'a. When we call Imamate the pivot of faith and its asas (i.e. foundation) and do not discuss messenger ship we discuss Imamate, it is only due to the fact that once we can establish Imamate, the proof of messenger ship naturally follows, for one who accepts an Imam, accepts a messenger. But not everyone who accepts a messenger realises the truth of Imamate. The proof of messenger ship is for the general non-Muslim public to establish, while the proof of Imamate is restricted to the Muslims who are nearer to faith. The struggle with them is fought out by discussion and controversy and not by sword. The world is never without an Imam, while the Prophet appears only from time to time. Therefore, to prove Imamate is to prove messenger ship. God has called the Imam, messenger e.g. in the Qur'anic verse: "Read in the Book about Isma'il for he is true to promise. He was the messenger, the prophet." Again, the Prophet has been called Imam e.g. in the Qur'anic verse about Abraham: "Verily I have made you an Imam for the people" This was said to him after he had completed the messenger ship: "When God put Abraham to test and he came through it, He said to him: I have made you an Imam for the people."

Qadi'n-Nu'man in his Book **Asas at-Ta'wil** says: "God has linked the obedience to the messenger

and to the Imams to His obedience and has said: 'Obey God and obey the messenger as well as the people of authority among you.'" God has made the obedience to the Natiq and the Asas equally obligatory. Natiqs are seven: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and the seventh would be Qa'im az-Zaman. Asas comes after Natiq for the interpretation of Batin."

The Batin (Esoteric Interpretation):

The Isma'ilis in general and the Nizaris in particular believe that the religion has two aspects: the Zahir (or the outward) which is revelation (tanzil) and the batin (or the inward) which is interpretation (ta'wil). This division follows the division of a human being into zahir which is his body, the matter and batin which is his soul. Religion as a whole cover all the human affairs. The zahir-side of it governs the outward affairs of man like the routine prayers and his relation with the society as well as the society's relations with him. In this aspect all classes of people are one whether they may be learned or ignorant, intelligent or feeble-minded, big or small, individual or society. Its only criterion is a verbal declaration and physical action. As for the batini-side of religion, it relates to his plane of consciousness such as his conceptions of the meanings of the articles of faith and his experiences of them. It also relates to his experiments in spiritual development and exercises in the purification of soul. It

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concerns observations in the affairs of the spirit. The knowledge of each individual about these affairs varies from that of the other. Not every individual has the same realisation of the batini-side of Faith and because of that the degree of their conviction varies. God has said: "Not all the People of the Book are equal, there being (among them) people who read the verses of the Book during all the night and bow (before God). They believe in God and in the Day of Judgment. They order good to be done and bad to be kept away from". God has also revealed: "Can those who know and those who do not know be equal. This, the sensible people consider."

The Isma'ili da'is have composed many books emphasising the necessity of ta'wil and the derivation of the batini meanings to suit the needs of those who are devoted to the esotericism of faith. Qadi'n-Nu'man in his book **Asas at-Ta'wil** says "Everything has two aspects-objective (zahir) and subjective (batin). The objective aspect is realised by senses while the subjective side is apprehended by means of knowledge. Zahir and batin are counterparts of each other. God the Almighty has revealed: 'of everything we have created pairs, if only you think about it' Everything which is in the Tradition (hadith) and Revelation (tanzil) has a counterpart in the batini meaning in distinction of the One Unique Being, the God, thus there is nothing in this world, which can exist without a counterpart. Man is one, but he is composed of

two things - the body and the soul. Body is the Zahir while the soul is the batin-part of him. Accordingly, everything in the world has counterparts, if one thinks about it. God has referred to batin in another place, thus: "He has bestowed on you his favours, known (zahir) and unknown (batin), and has made it clear that He will ask His devotees about favours which He has bestowed on them." Another Quranic verse states "You shall certainly be asked on that Day about the favours". One who does not know the batin of God's favours, when he is asked about them, how will he reply." God has again said: "Refrain from the zahir of sin as well as its batin." One who avoids the sin without knowing the batin of it, stands in the danger of falling into it? A Quranic verse states: "He has revealed to you a Book containing fundamental verses which are the basis (umm) of the Book and others which are allegorical. As for those who have doubts in their minds follow the allegorical verses hoping to create mischief, and wishing to make interpretations, but none knows the interpretations except God and those who have a profound knowledge. We have said in the book Hudud al-Ma'rifa that one who maintains ta'wil while he is ignorant of it, and the one who avoids it denying its truth are equally mistaken, God has said: "Will they see anything but its interpretation on the Day when the interpretation will be given. Those who had previously forgotten would say: Messengers came from our Lord with truth. Are there any intercessors, who would intercede for us?"

Or, could we go back and do good deeds which we had not done before. They are at a loss and they have been abandoned by those in whom they wrongly reposed their faith." The Messenger of Allah (may the prayers and peace of Allah be on him) has said: "Every verse of the Qur'an that has been revealed on me has an outward as well as an inward aspect." We have also written in book: "**Hudud al-Ma'rifa** about the agreement among the Umma according to the lines mentioned above and about the mischief done by improper interpretation. We stated that they maintain a batini meaning when they do not find a way out of it and they persist in it due to necessity, being helpless without it. At one place knowledge has been compared to water. Similarly error with darkness, blindness, deafness or dumbness which are not the outward meanings. Women have been compared with ewes and so on. When they hear such interpretations which imply the unity of God and His being above the human attributes, they deny them and attach human qualities to God. They hear the examples that God repeatedly mentions in the Book about His devotees. For example, we have the Qur'anic verse: "We give those analogies for people. Only the intelligent can understand them." Also: To every one of them we gave analogies and everyone have we destroyed completely" God has also said: "Verily God does not refrain from giving analogies even a mosquito or anything else. Those who believe will know that it is truth from their Lord, and those who disbelieve uphold

the outward meaning of the analogy. He guides as well as misleads many with it. None is misled except the evil-doers who criticise the covenant of God after they have given the oath and they sever connections with that which God has commanded them to remain united with, and they do mischief on the Earth." God has again said: "In the Qur'an We have drawn many analogies."

God has stated that even the stories have interpretations. In connection with the story of Joseph, the Qur'an states: "Thus does your Lord chose you and teach you the interpretation of the stories." Again: "Thus We established Yusuf on the Earth and taught him the interpretations of stories." In many verses of His Book, God has mentioned the analogies and the Batini meaning in the interpretations. They are commonly used in the Arabic language in which the Qur'an was revealed and through which God addressed them. It is one of His miracles and one of the wonders of His work that in one revelation, He combines both the Zahiri and the batini meanings. The zahiri side of it is the miracle of the Prophet while the batini side is the miracle of the Imams from the Prophet's Household. This knowledge of batin cannot be given by any other than these Imams just as the zahir of the revealed Book cannot be obtained from anyone other than the Prophet. This knowledge (of the Book) is delegated to them (i.e. Imams) as heirs and is a trust with them, not found with anyone else but them. They keep back from a person what should be kept back and they avoid a person whom

it is necessary to avoid.

This much is enough to give an idea as to the absolute authority that is enjoyed by the Asas or the Imam over his followers and as to his high position in the world of religion. Our interpretation that the name "Assassin" given to the Isma'ilis is actually "Asasin" from their belief in the Asas, is on the analogy of the name "Imamiyin" given to them due to their belief in the Imam. The appellation "Asasin" is synonymous with the name "Imamiyin". It is submitted that other analyses and dissections of the word "Assassin" by the historians are evidently erroneous due probably to the unfamiliar use of the word Asas.

Hashish and the Sufis:

Despite all this we have to admit that the name Hashashiyim may have been given to the followers of Hasan for the similarity between them and the Sufis, particularly because of the name 'Batini' which is attached to both the parties and because hashish was commonly used in sufi circles. Sufi poets have written many poems in praise of hashish, but it is not possible to reproduce all of them here. It is said that the first Sufi to discover the usefulness of hashish was Shaykh Haydar, who lived in Nishawar in Khurasan. He had taken a cave in the mountain as his residence where he lived for more than ten

years. One day when it was very hot, he went to the desert by himself and returned happy and active-quite contrary to his usual habits as evidenced by his companions. He asked his friends to join him in a discussion. When they saw him in such a friendly mood which he had never experienced during the long period of privacy and aloofness they asked him the reason for it. So he replied: "When I was alone, I thought of going out to the desert. On reaching it I found all the plants still, without the slightest movement, because of the absence of wind and burning heat. I saw a plant which had leaves and they moved very gently without the slightest shake like the dizziness caused by intoxication. I plucked a few leaves and ate them and I got into a happy mood in which you find me now."

He took his companions to that hashish plant and asked them to keep secret its properties from the common people, saying: "God has chosen you to know about the secret properties of these leaves, so that when you eat them your baser sentiments may disappear and that by its effect your noble thoughts may be evoked. You may keep and preserve it as a sacred trust."

Shaykh Haydar, at the time of his death, asked his followers to inform their sympathisers in Khurasan about this drug; and asked them to grow hashish, plants round his tomb as if he recalled the last words of the poet:

"When I die bury me beside the vine; so that my bones may be fed by its roots. Do not bury me in the jungle lest I should be deprived of it after my death."

Hashish since that time was known as the wine of Haydar, about which the poet says:"

"Leave all drinks and take to the wine of Haydar (i.e. Hashish)

which has the scent of ambergris and is green like topaz

This hashish will move by the slightest breeze

And will open its heart to welcome the cool morning breezes

The singing-bird will chant on its branches at morn

And the hashish-plant will dance to its tune.

It has qualities which the wine lacks.

So hear not what the slanderers say about it.

It is virgin untouched with hands or feet.

And its juice is not obtained

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The monk has not meddled with its cup

Nor has any hand touched its jar.

No law-giver has prohibited it

Whether he be Malik, Shafi'i or Ahmad

Nu'man (Abu Hanifa) has not declared it
impure

So obtain it even if you have to use the
edges of the famous Syrian or Indian swords

Take this and stop worrying. Rest

And do not leave the joys of today to
tomorrow."

Some writers attribute the discovery of
hashish to one of the Indian philosophers.
Their contention is supported by the poet
in the following verses:

"She appeared and whatever love was hidden
in my heart sprang forth

She came and the army of my cares and
worries turned away

She is beautiful in her qualities,
resplendent in her position

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When she approaches, my poetry waxes
eloquent in her praise

Rise, drive the army of your cares away and
keep down the hand of trouble

With the Indian (hashish), white and brown
in hue

It is Indian in its taste and effect on the
people

And not Indian because of its brown colour

The frightfulness of cares vanish from us
on eating it

Which brings us happiness secretly and in
open."

Maqrizi has said:

"Hashish was known to the Greeks. Buqrat
and Galen wrote about its characteristics,
uses and properties."

In short, hashish was commonly used in the sufi
circles and it came to be known as the hashish
of the poor.

The exponents of zahir have many a time attacked
the sufis for their use of hashish which

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they consider as one of the afflictions on the morals of people. One of their poets says:

I saw the soft unwilling beloved

I never meet him in an agreeable mood

I saw him, some nigh smiling

Pleasant and gay during the seances I had my desires with him fulfilled and thanked him

For having given me company after the unpleasantness

He said: Do not thank me; thank wine of the poor

the hashish which is the medium of love for lovers

If you ever think of enticing an unwilling gazelle

Then let it graze the hashish of Qunbus

Thank the discovery of Haydar (i.e. Hashish) when they appear

To the immoral people with a religion of magic

Leave aside the unhappy and let me be

With the slanderer away from the good
opinion of the people."

The Sufis were subjected to the hatred of the theologians and the zahiri scholars and experienced frightful persecution at their hands. Was not Hallaj killed? Was not Abu Yazid al-Bistami driven away from his town Bistam seven times by the intrigues of the Ulema? Was not Dhu'n-Nun al-Misri accused of **zandaqa** (heresy) and taken into chains from Egypt to Baghdad? Did not the Ulema give a Fatwa (verdict) of disbelief against Abu Sa'id al-Khazzar? Was not Sahl b. 'Abd Allah at-Tustari accused of disbelief and driven away from his town to Basra in spite of his high position? Was not Muhammad b. Fadl al-Balkhi driven away from Balkh after he was girdled with rope round his neck and paraded through the streets? Was not Shibli charged with disbelief many a time? Did not Imam Abu Hanifa experience severe treatment from the Caliphs? Did not the people persecute Imam Malik who hid himself for twenty-five years and could not even go for Friday prayers? Did not the people of Iraq and Egypt ill-treat Imam Shafi'i? Was not Imam Hanbal beaten and imprisoned? It is clear that those who were persecuting these people were doing it from selfish ends, worldly consideration and political reasons hidden in the garb of religion because of their fear of the public opinion.

In short, the exponents of zahir crossed all bounds in harassing the batini scholars and tried to punish them in various mean ways. Sha'arani writes;

"The people of Aleppo were annoyed with the arguments of Shaykh Nasimi and planned to punish him by a trick. They wrote the **Surat al-Ikhlās** on a piece of paper and bribed a cobbler to stitch the paper in a shoe which they later presented to the Shaykh in such a manner that the latter would not suspect them. The Shaykh unknowingly began using the shoes. Then they went to the governor of Aleppo and said that they had heard from reliable sources that Nasimi had written the **Surat al-Ikhlās** in the layers of his shoes, and if proof was needed, then his shoes might be seen. So Nasimi's shoes were split open and the above-mentioned piece of paper taken out. The Shaykh submitted himself to the will of God. He was skinned alive till he died with a smile on his face."

It is therefore quite probable that the similarity between the Nizari and Sufis helped the enemies of Hasan to describe the Nizari community by the name "al-Hashshashin". This was the name given to the Sufi initiates who were hated by the vulgar crowd and the zahiris and they applied it to the Nizaris also because of the same hatred. It is humbly submitted that this explanation seems to be satisfactory.

The Influence of Isma'ili Teachings on the Sufi schools of thought.

It is known that the Isma'ili creed follows in its teaching the spiritual meanings derived from religion and that Isma'ilism and sufism both give batini interpretation to religious dictums and emphasise that religion has two aspects-the zahir and the batin and of the two, the batini meanings are the true purpose of religion. It is believed that the Isma'ili school of thought is the source of sufistic ideas in Islam. One of the writers on the subject states: "Isma'ili madhhab is a deep ocean of spiritual secrets in which mingle the streams of mysticism." Some of the Afghan writers have maintained that the creators of sufistic movements in Afghanistan were from among the da'is of Hasan b. as-Sabbah who came to the country at the end of 11th century A.D.

Sufism, undoubtedly, was the chief characteristic of the Shi'ite movements in the 3rd century H., and Kufa which was the principal bastion of the Shi'a was also the centre of sufistic societies. About the early Sufi Shaykhs it is said that they took their spiritual knowledge from the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt and connected their madhhab with that of Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq. Most of the sufi writers attribute the origin of sufi garments to the custom of Ali b. Abi Talib and describe him as the first person to preach the spiritual values.

The attachment of the sufis to the Ahl al-Bayt is still strong.

Sufis and Isma'ilis are similar in a way. Every Isma'ili is a sufi, but not every sufi is an Isma'ili. This is because Isma'ilism is a religion as well as a social system with its own rules and characteristics, while sufism is an individual concern, or from another angle, it is one of the batini sciences. It is therefore not surprising that the early as well as modern historians have described Ibn Arabi, Suhrawardy, Hallaj, al-Junayd al-Baghdadi, Abu Yazid al-Bistani and other great sufis as Isma'ili da'is because of the marked similarity between sufism and Isma'ilism.

Apart from the question whether these sufis were Isma'ili da'is or not, the fact remains that sufism in its various forms was influenced by the Isma'ili ideas to the greatest extent. Sufis verily, are none but students in the school of Batini Isma'ilism. This is quite clear to one who had studied Islamic mysticism. The author of **K. al-madhab wa't-Ta'lim al-Batini** says that Sufism is a copy of Isma'ilism for it follows the latter's' organisation, hierarchical stages of its dignitaries and terminology.

The Sufi scholars speak of four periods: The period of **Shari'a** which is one of work according to the zahir (outward-dictates) of shari'a; the period of **tariqa** which combines in itself work according to the outward and the inward aspects

of shari'a; the period of **haqiqa** which concerns the batin exclusively and which deals with the watchfulness over the conditions of spiritual grades towards the Divine vision; and the period of Divine knowledge which is one of recovery from the mystical trance. In this last period, a seeker discovers the truths of creation, the wisdom of invention, the knowledge of the arrangement and grades of Existence and the realisation of the Unity of Existence in diversity and its diversity in Unity. This classification is also derived from the Nizari Da'wa as noted before. Ivanow says: "The sufi classification of religion in **shari'a**, **tariqa**, **haqiqa** and **ma'rifa** is based on the Isma'ili distinction between zahir and batin. Ghazali understood sufism as a batini matter. He said: "Sufism is a batini matter not commonly understood nor is it possible to grasp it properly."

It is worthwhile noticing the Ghazali that says this as well as the Ghazali that attacked the batinis when he was a teacher at the Nizamiyya madrasa. He now glorifies the batini people and follows them after having been a bitter enemy of them.

Sufism was never restricted to Darwishes or those clad in the garments of sufi orders. It has been a spiritual experience both of the rich as well as the poor, of the libertine as well as the pious. Many a flash of truth has kindled from the lightheaded people and they are nearer

to sufism and spiritualism than most of those who show themselves in the garb of monks but in their heart of hearts cherish mean desires unworthy even of beasts and animals.

One of the crimes of intellectual and spiritual life is that we describe the poor and the helpless along as pious and abstinent, although piety lies in abandoning a thing after having possessed it and abstinence, in being powerful and yet controlling one's passion. The Dervishes who are not capable of any badness cannot strive to be pious. They are parasites in the world of morals. Morals are only tested in the midst of riches and plenty. One who wants to study sufism one should turn to the lives of people with plenty and the young folks. They are the real workers in the world of morals and are the real sufis although they do not don the sufi garments and do not constantly keep to the prayer niche. How well has the poet said:

"Your abstinence is but a deceit, for real abstinence is that of a youth who having the passions can overpower them."

How can sufism be restricted to the people who observe merely its outward formalities while it is the concern primarily of the heart and soul? I would repeat with Ghazali:

"Sufism is a batini matter not commonly understood, nor is it possible to grasp it properly."

In short, the influence of Isma'ili batini teachings is clearly noticed in the sufi schools of thought. We mark it in Husayn b. Mansur al-Hallaj who called people to a batini faith. Again, when the Shaykh Abu'l Hasan al-Ash'ari criticised the extremists among the Shi'a, he mentioned them along with one of the sufi groups.

Organisation of Da'wa.

Da'wa is considered one of the foundations of the Isma'ili madhhab. Since the beginning of Ismailism until now the da'is have continued to propagating their madhhab and spread its teachings among the followers. In the Isma'ili system, the Da'wa has definite rules and a thorough organisation according to which the da'is mould their actions, big or small. Maqrizi writes: "The post of the Da'i ad-Du'at was a particular feature of the Fatimid State." Maqrizi is right, and even if he had said that the post was a particular feature of the Fatimid madhhab, he would have been correct. The Isma'ili party was a religious body and not a political one. The States that it gave rise to in the East as well as the West were a result of different conditions which we have described before. These states were not like the other ordinary ones but were based on a religious organisation of Isma'ili society which took at times a political colour. This order exists even today although the political colour has faded away. Da'wa goes side by side with the Imamate and whenever there

is Imamate there is Da'wa, because the Imam inherits the Da'wa from the Prophet and God has described the Prophets as da'is in the Qur'an, thus: "O Prophet, We have sent you as a witness, a giver of good tidings, a warner, a da'i to the cause of God by His command and as a bright lamp." He has also said: "For him is the da'wa of truth" Again: "Call to the path of your Lord with wisdom and good counsel" and "Call to your Lord for verily you are on the right path" In the Quran there are many verses besides these which go to show that the Prophets were only da'is from God to his devotees.

"It is the same whether an Imam is a king, in the ordinary meaning of the word, or not a king, but he wields an absolute power over his followers all the same. He is remarkable centre round which the whole madhhab revolves and for him the Da'wa exists in every place and time. A pure Isma'ili state is in fact nothing but a powerful representation of the Da'wa. Maqrizi has said: "When Mu'izz reached Egypt and Jawhar withdrew from its rulership, he engaged himself in the work of Da'wa and after Mu'izz the other Fatimid caliphs did the same. They were helped in the spread of their faith by the Da'is who also served in the army for the religious education of the fighters. After the conquest the Da'wa of the Fatimid Faith was organised by the Da'id-Du'at who was one of the high officials of the State and had been allotted a special quarter by Mu'izz in his Palace. His

headquarter however was in the Azhar Mosque which was specially built to serve as a centre for the Da'wa and recruitment to Shi'ism.

"Da'id-Du'at was helped by twelve deputies for the diffusion of the Fatimid teaching. He also had representatives deputising for him in various provinces of Egypt. The theologians of the State came to him to receive orders. They would make discourses in his presence on Tuesdays about the principles of the Shi'i madhhab. The da'i would himself present these discourses to the Caliph who would retain what he approved of and cancel whatever he disliked with his signature. The Caliph would return these discourses to the Da'i who in turn would give them back to their authors for reading to the public.

"The Da'id-Du'at held seances of learning in two big places in the Royal Palace. He would occupy the Chair of the Da'wa in the Diwan and would first lecture to the men. Then a special **majlis** would be held for the ladies, known as the Majlis of the Da'i. In these two places he would lecture to the people and impart to them the Ismaili principles. When he finished his lectures, the people would go to him and kiss his hands. He would then touch their heads with the part of the written lecture which contained the signature of the Caliph. The chief Da'i would collect the **najwa** (a religious tax) from the Isma'ilis during the sessions of these

seances. When any person from among the Isma'ilis gave 33, 2/3 dinars, he was given a small paper with the Caliph's signature. It contained the words: "May God bless you in your wealth, children and faith". The person treasured the paper and was proud of it.

"The chief Da'i would constantly attend the seances in the Palace to deliver lecture. He would separately lecture to the Alids, to the select and the officers of the State, to the general public and the foreign visitors and to the harem and the ladies of the Palace... The ladies would also attend the seances held in the Azhar Mosque.

"The Caliph's Palace contained a large collection of books for the propagation of the Ismaili doctrines among the people and the Fatimids paid great attention to it.

The above description supports our contention that the Isma'ili State was none other than the Isma'ili Da'wa in the royal position and its politics was aimed at propagating the Isma'ili doctrines, besides other minor things, as opposed to the politics of other states like the Ummayyad, the Abbasid and those of petty dynasties in Islam which established hollow Da'was in order to gain power. Once their end was achieved, they turned to purely political affairs and after their political decline, not a trace of them remained. As for the Fatimids, as we have said, they were a religious body who

established the Da'wa for their faith. The state was a political cover for the organisation of their Da'wa. When this cover was taken away, the Da'wa organisation itself was not affected in the least and it continued to exist to the present day in its original form. This is quite evident in the Isma'ili community today. The propaganda of the Abbasids and the Saljuqid amirs and particularly of the Nizami group, however, misrepresented the Isma'ili points of view and attributed to Isma'ilis heresy and disbelief, in order to hide their own faults. Their behaviour was just like that of the modern political states. The historians have said that the enemies of Hasan did not rest content with their military action against Hasan and his followers but incited against them the Ulema and theologians who spread the propaganda against the doctrines of Hasan and gave derogatory explanation about the organisation of his society. They insinuated that Hasan's aim was to corrupt the beliefs of the people and destroy their shari'a. Some of them attributed a false division to Hasan's society in nine stages or grades.

It is said that in the first stage, Hasan's da'is used to confuse a seeker after truth by putting strange questions and by attaching hidden meanings to the text of the Qur'an. In the second stage they obliged him to take an oath of secrecy and instructed him in the knowledge of the Imams who in their madhhab were

considered the sole representatives of God and the sources of all knowledge. When the seeker reached the third stage they informed him of the number of these Imams which did not exceed seven. In the fourth stage they explained to him that when God created the world, He made seven law-givers and divines. They were the seven Messengers known in their madhhab as Natiqs. When the seeker reached the fifth stage, they informed him that for each of these messengers, there are twelve helpers for the true Da'wa. In the sixth stage they taught him the Islamic sunna and convinced him that all the religious laws that have been laid down are subject to certain general philosophies of Plato, Aristotle and Pythagoras. To them, this was the highest type of knowledge. In the seventh stage the seeker was transferred from the field of philosophy to the field of mysticism. In the eighth stage they gave him a cultural training by teaching him things about the religious position of the Prophets and Messengers and tried to make him reject the ideas of Heaven and Hell; and give up the practice of shari'a. They maintained that to any action there was no reward or punishment attached either in this world or the next. Lastly, the seeker entered the ninth stage in which he blindly followed his shaykh; did not oppose him in any matter, nor did he revolt on any point even if such a blind following may have meant death to him." The contradiction in the above hostile description of Hasan's Da'wa is quite obvious. How can one follow a shaykh

blindly after undergoing such a long course of training and after being told that there is no reward for any good act, nor any punishment for any bad one. Again, why should he obey and sacrifice everything for the command of the shaykh when he has no principle or aim, nor any motive or attraction. Moreover, how could a system exist without any sound foundation.

This classification is a distortion of the actual organisation of the Da'wa and its teachings in the Isma'ili society. It is true that a seeker is not given all the knowledge at one time but by stages till he attains the position of the religious dignitaries like the da'is, the Hujjas and the Babs. There is nothing new in this. Every educational or religious institution follows and should follow this system. The whole trouble is that the Abbasids never let go a single point, however trifling it may be, to pillory the Isma'ilis and use it for their selfish propaganda. When they failed to defeat Hasan in the battlefield, they resorted to false propaganda and distorted truth, misrepresenting it to the reporters who accepted as true whatever was available and parrot-like repeated it to others without pausing to verify what they had heard. As an illustration of how a report can be twisted and turned, a story of Kamil Kilani is reproduced below for the reader's diversion:

Abu'l-Ghusn Abd Allah Juha, the imaginary character relates:

The other day, I heard a strange report which can be briefly stated as follows: A man in the outskirts of the town told me that a crow was born to the wife of a particular person and it flew and disappeared from sight. I asked my informer as to who had told him this story. The man gave me the name of the person and I went to him and asked him about this report. He told me that he had only said that the crow walked and went away. From him too I got the name of his informer and went to the latter asking him about the truth of the report. That man told me that the crow neither walked nor flew but stood still and shortly died I repeated the same question again about his informer and he gave me the latter's name. So, I continued to trace the original source from one reporter to another and was surprised to hear from each of them a story different from others. One of the reporters told me that the child in question was not a crow but a bird like it. Another said that it was neither a crow nor any other bird but a human child with the head of crow, still another variegated that it was a crow with a human head. As I continued to draw near to the source of this story, the reports became more perplexing and stranger. When I discovered the original reporter, he turned out to be a friend of mine, Abu'l-Fadl Ibrahim by name. I hurried to his house and found him engaged in nightly discussions with his friends. I had hardly finished relating to Abu'l-Fadl what I had heard and asking him about the true version that he burst out laughing

surprised at the falsehoods and credulity of people in meddling with the reports. Abu'l-Fadl, then, turned to one of his companions and said: O, Abu Hammad, would not you reply to one of Abu'l-Ghusns queries?" I turned to Abu Hommad who told me with a smile that Abu'l-Fadl had told him this a long time back. His wife had given birth to a nice child whom he named Khalid (meaning-one who lives long deriving a good omen from it for the child's long life). One of those who were present had remarked to him that the child Khalid would have as long a life as a crow. So, he addressed Abu'l-Fadl in a tone of endearment and joking saying: May God give a long life to this crow--longer than those of other crows'. Abu Hammad, paused for a while and said: This, then, is all that I had said and nothing more. I cannot understand how people have tempered with these words of endearment, O, Abu Ghusn and how they have turned and twisted and changed the report altogether'. In short, the people went on adding and altering the report thinking that the child was born a crow and then they imagined that the crow flew and disappeared. This had surprised Abu Hammad very much. Laughing and beating his hands he recited the following verse: They report what I never say and the real trouble about any news are its reporters'.

The reporters of Hasan are no better than the reporters of Abu Hammad nor is there among

them a person like Abu'l-Ghusn 'Abd Allah Juha who would care to verify the reports that he gets by tracing them to their original sources.

SECTION V

Hasan's wars with the Saljuqids:-

When the news of Hasan's occupation of the fortress of Alamut reached the court of Malikshah, the Wazir Nizam al-Mulk was extremely perturbed particularly when he was informed by his men of the history of this fortress and its strategic situation, difficulty of approaching it, its invincibility and its strong structure of stone. He was also informed about the neighbouring villages which could supply Alamut with provisions and help in withstanding the siege successfully. Nizam al-Mulk, then, began making preparation for fight with Hasan and for depriving him of the fortress. The first person to instigate him to attack Hasan was one of Malikshah's commanders named Tuntash who was governor of the Rudbar district. He directed many serious attacks at Alamut but shortly died. None of his combats with the Fida'is is of any great importance.

Nizam al-Mulk, on getting the news of the rout of Tuntash's armies completely lost his balance; began to think that the danger was imminent and that Hasan would not be satisfied with occupying a fortress or two. So, he started recruiting a

big army and cavalry, inciting the bodyguard of Malikshah in various ways and employing the pens of the theologians and the Ulema against Hasan and his followers. He infused Sultan Malikshah with his ideas with the result that the latter dispatched two big armies, one to Alamut under the command of Arslan Tash the famous commander and the other to combat Hasayn al-Qa'ini, Hasan's da'iin one of the fortresses of Khurasan under the command of Qazl Sariq. Moreover, a war of words was instituted with Ghazali as the chief opponent of Hasan's doctrines. Hasan's contestants took to finding fault with his principles and propagating against his madhhab to such an extent that the common people rose against the Isma'ilis. They followed the Isma'ilis, broke in their houses and killed men, women, children and the old alike.

The siege of Alamut.

The army of Arslan Tash arrived at Alamut in Jamada I, 485 H. and asked Hasan to surrender. Hasan, in reply asked them to leave the fortress alone and to go back. Arslan then besieged the fortress from all the sides and plundered the neighbouring villages even of their food. Hasan imposed a system of ration in his fortress as is done in our times during the days of war, and thus he could hold out against the enemy till help came from Didar Ali (or Didar Abu Ali), his da'i in Qazwin. With his 300 men, he attacked the army of Arslan Tash one night and a fierce

battle took place which Didar Ali won. He captured much booty as Arslan fled towards Isfahan. When Nizam al-Mulk heard of this he was very much grieved and his anxieties increased all the more. He decided to equip another army for annihilating the Nizaris but death intervened between him and his design. As for Qazl Sariq's army, it raised the siege from Husayn al-Qa'ini's fortress and withdrew from his fight with the Isma'ilis on hearing of Sultan Malikshah's death which followed closely after the death of Nizam al-Mulk.

It is said that Arslan Tash continued the siege of Alamut for four months and did not see any Isma'ili resident of the fortress at all except one day when his army sighted on the top of the fortress a man clad in white clothes, who looked at the army for a while and disappeared.

We have noted before that the wazir Nizam al-Mulk died before Malikshah and was killed by the latter. Various reasons have been given for this. One of them is that the Sultan feared his growing influence. According to another view Malikshah had come under the influence of the Isma'ili madhhab and hated the wazir on account of the latter's enmity towards it. Ibn al-Jawzi says: "The beliefs of Sultan Malikshah were corrupted because of his company of the batinis ". It is very likely that Malikshah was influenced by the Isma'ili madhhab and his sending an army to fight Hasan was only under

pressure of the advice of Nizam al-Mulk whose authority in the Saljuqid court knew no bounds. In short Nizam al-Mulk died when he was most anxious to secure a final victory over Hasan.

Hasan's conflicts with the sons of Malikshah.

The Saljuqid state passed through serious convulsions after the death of Malikshah due to the wars waged by his sons among themselves. This had given Hasan a golden opportunity for fortifying and strengthening his centres, supplying his fortresses with men, provisions, and treasures and safeguarding the communications between him and his governors and chiefs of the Da'wa in Isfahan like Ahmad b. Abu al-Malik b. Attash etc.

Previously we have mentioned that Hasan was extremely averse to fighting because his politics was that of religion and all that concerned him was to convey the message of his Imam to the people, and to live with the Isma'ilis under the guardianship of their Imam in peace and security. His wars, therefore, were defensive. However, when he was subjected to a strained situation, he would find out the root cause of the trouble and crush it with all his force. It was on such considerations that the Isma'ilis fought with the Saljuquids for almost a century.

We find from reliable historical sources that the sons of Malikshah, with the exception of Muhammad did not like to continue fighting with the Isma'ilis, but were compelled to do that in order to avoid the accusation of being conciliatory to the Nizari community. When Barkiyaruq b. Malikshah took charge of the saljuqid sultanate and did not show any enthusiasm for fighting the Isma'ilis, the mob and the theologians accused him of favouring the Ismailis. Isfahani says: "The Sultan was forced to expose them (i.e. Isma'ilis) in self-defence fearing that the people and the priests may accuse him of heresy and corrupt beliefs as they did in the case of the Prince of Kirman. They removed him under the charge of showing favour to the Isma'ilis and appointed another in his stead." Ibn al-Jawzi writes: "Barkiyaruq by his declaration of enmity towards the Nizaris removed the doubts in the minds of people so that the suspicion in which he was held began to melt away. But in spite of that, we find that Barkiyaruq did not declare war against the Nizari, nor did he dispatch troops against them, nor besiege their fortresses. The most that he did was to banish from his territories the danger of their influence which had been growing day by day and which had attracted to the Isma'ili faith many big personalities of the Saljuqs like the ruler of Yazd, Ibn Mustahfaz in Iraq and many of Barkiyaruq's leuitenants, so much so that one of his wazirs had been killed by his sunni army because they suspected him, doubted his sincerity and attributed to him

belief in the Nizari doctrines. Truly, Hasan b. as-Sabbah's movement was extremely subtle and logical. While the Saljuqs were engaged in despatching armies to Hasan's fortresses, the latter was winning over the high officials in charge of them to the Isma'ili doctrines. This was a matter which Barkiyaruq dreaded and feared that the government would slip into the hands of the Nizaris if he connived at their activities.

On the other hand, Muhammad b. Malikshah, when he found the field clear and when he became a sultan in 498 H., he turned fiercely towards the Isma'ilis and made it a habit to fight with them till he recovered the fortress of Shahdur in Isfahan and killed Ahmad b. Abd al-Malik b. Attash, the chief of the Da'wa there.

Shahdur which was occupied in 488 H. by the other Isma'ili leader Ibn Attash during the reign of Barkiyaruq was the centre of the Da'wa in Faris, just as Alamut was the centre of the Da'wa in Khurasan. Ibn Attash was a great diplomat and an expert in the tactics of Da'wa and in winning over the hearts of people to his faith. Moreover, he was brave and courageous who by virtue of his practicality could enlist a large following for his madhhab from the people of Isfahan. The number of recruits reached 30,000 or more. He remained in possession of the fortress for 12 years, i.e. from 488 to 500 H.

Sultan Muhammad b. Malikshah embarked on his wars with the Isma'ilis by attacking the fortress of Shahdur. He actually headed the attack himself and had a large army. Isma'ilis were only 80 but they displayed a unique agility in fighting. Ibn al-Attash tried to convince Sultan Muhammad to refrain from fighting and requested him to end the matter non-violently but he did not succeed, and after a magnificent defence he was overpowered by the armies of the Sultan and taken prisoner. He was paraded in Isfahan and then skinned alive till he died. His son was killed and his wife threw herself from the fortress and died.

After the death of Ibn Attash the Imam put Hasan in charge of the entire Da'wa and then onwards Alamut became the headquarters of the Isma'ili community.

Hasan and Sultan Muhammad.

After the fall of Shahdur and the death of Ibn Attash in 500 H. Sultan Muhammad sent his armies to the fortress of Alamut in 501 or 503 H. under the command of his wazir Ahmad b. Nizam al-Mulk, the deadliest enemy of Hasan b. as-Sabbah then living. The fortress was stormed but the attack fizzled out and could not attain its end. Hasan got sight of his adversary Ahmad b. Nizam al-Mulk during the battle and taught him such a lesson that he never led another attack against him. But Sultan Mohammad continued to be

inimical to Isma'ilis and in 505 H. he sent a big detachment against Hasan, readied by Nushtagin Shirgir the chief commander and the teacher of Sultan's son Tughril Beg. Nushtagin laid a siege round the fortress and for a proper encirclement, built houses for his soldiers. Ibn al-Athir writes: "He (i.e. Sultan Muhammed) urged the amir Nushtagin Shirgir to fight (Hasan). Nushtagin occupied many fortresses including the fortress of Kalam in Jamada I, 505 H. This fortress was in charge of Ali b. Musa who was driven away together with his followers to Alamut. The amir also occupied the fortress of Bira which was situated at a distance of seven parasangs from Qazwin. From here too, he drove away its residents to Alamut where he finally proceeded with his army. He was also helped later by the Sultan who sent the amirs to him. He laid a siege to the fortress. He had the best of people from the point of view of intelligence and bravery of whom he himself was the most outstanding. He ordered the construction of houses around the fortress, and he lived there with his men. He allotted fixed lengths of time during which each group of the amirs would stay there and stand guard in turn. Thus, the siege could continue for a long time. The sultan kept on sending men, money and provisions to reinforce Nushtagin's troops. The Batinis of Hasan had a very bad time. Their provisions dwindled. When their condition became very difficult, they asked their women and

children to go down and ask the besiegers to allow them to go away from there. But the latter did not grant them this request and sent them back to the fortress hoping that they would die of hunger. Ibn as-Sabbah rationed the food among his men to a bread and three fresh walnuts for each person. Just at the time. this rationing was ordered, Hasan's men received the news of Sultan Muhammad's death and were very much encouraged. Surprisingly the besieging army received the news a day later and decided to withdraw. Shirgir later reported that when his army was withdrawing the Isma'ilis attacked them and plundered the provisions and monies which they had collected. He had advised the army to remain at the fortress till it would open its gates and if they did not wish to remain, they should at least stay on for three days more till the provisions could be consumed and the things that were un-transportable could be destroyed so that the enemy may not take advantage of them. When the army heard this, they accepted Shirgir's advice and promised to stay; but at the nightfall they quietly slipped away without consultation. Only Shirgir was left with a few men. The Isma'ilis took this opportunity to attack him. He fought and defended himself but later joined the withdrawing army. When they left the fortress the Isma'ilis took possession of all that was left behind."

The Saljuqs made many a vain attempt to destroy the Isma'ilis but they could never attain that political acumen and diplomatic maturity which

the Nizari chiefs possessed. The Nizaris were scattered among the ranks of the Saljuqid Army and their da'is has also infiltrated into the Diwan (courts). Sa'ad al-Malik, the Wazir of Sultan Muhammad was an Isma'ili. When he was killed, he was succeeded by another wazir ad-Darkazini who was also an Isma'ili. It was he who plotted the murder of Shirgir, the arch-enemy of the Isma'ilis after he had ordered him to raise the siege from Alamut. In short, Hasan's agents had penetrated into the body-politic of the Saljuqids. Not a single situation in the government remained unaffected by their propaganda. This strengthened Hasan's camp and helped him considerably in extending his influence. On the other hand, the position of Hasan's enemies became precarious and their efforts were brought to naught.

Hasan and Sultan Sanjar:

When Sultan Muhammad died, he was succeeded in the headship of the Saljuqid state by Sultan Sanjar who tried to follow his predecessor's footsteps in his struggle with the Isma'ilis. His attitude towards them became more and more severe till at last he ordered a siege of Alamut. Hasan tried many times to dissuade the Sultan from his designs with much persuasion, tried to appeal to him in the name of peace and reminded him of the dire consequences of war. But when good counsel did not prevail upon him, Hasan ordered one of his followers in the Sultan's personal service to fix a dagger on the

side of the Sultan's bed with a note attached to it which read as follows: "Let it not deceive you that I lie far from you on the Rock of Alamut, because those whom you have chosen for your service are at my command and obey my directions. One who could fix this dagger in your bed could also have fixed it in your heart. But I saw in you a good man and have spared you. So let this be a warning to you."

On reading this note, Sultan Sanjar was filled with awe and was dumbfounded. He could not tell who was beside him and his nerves gave way. From that moment onward he knew that a war with Hasan would be just asking for death and destruction. So he changed his policy towards Hasan and ordered the raising of the siege from Alamut. He desisted from his inimical designs and concluded a pact of peace with Hasan in 516 H. which recognised the independence of Isma'ilis and conceded to Hasan the right of collecting the revenues of Qumis and its dependencies. It also granted to the Isma'ilis of Girdkuh in Khurasan the right to levy taxes on the caravans of traders passing by their territory. Following this treaty, notices were sent round the country informing the population of the agreement reached with the Isma'ilis. Other terms of the treaty were that the Isma'ilis should not build new fortresses; should not any more buy armaments and should not enlist any new convert to their faith after the date of signing the treaty.

But despite this, when people heard of this treaty, they began entering Hasan's following in large numbers of their own accord without being invited to the Isma'ili faith by any da'i. Thus, Hasan's influence spread throughout Persia and Khurasan with the speed of lightning.

It was an open secret that most of the Khurasanians and Persians particularly the high officials of the Suljuqid state had become Nizaris. When Sultan Sanjar acknowledged the independence of the Isma'ilis, they no more hid their beliefs and openly declared them in the public. Ibn Taba-taba says: "The Batini madhhab spread far and wide. A big number of high officials believed in it."

In short, Hasan realised in his lifetime many of his objectives as the independence of his religious state, the freedom for the Isma'ilis to follow their religion openly and the establishment of peace between him and his enemies by his political acumen and diplomatic ability which could force the mighty Saljuqid state to acknowledge the rights of the Isma'ilis-religious as well as political. Truly, did Hasan by his distinguished career set Rasafa, Abi Qubays, al-Muwaynaqa, al-Aliqa, al-Kahf, al-Khawabi, Sahyun, Barin, Shayzar, to the muslims in general and the Isma'ili da'is in particular an example of patience, perseverance and a profound faith.

Hasan's relations with Syria.

After Hasan b. as-Sabbah had completed his victory over the Saljuqids in Persia and Khurasan he directed his energies to other countries. To Aleppo he sent the famous da'i known as at-Tabib al-Munajjim at the close of the 5th century H. This da'i made every effort to spread the Isma'ili Da'wa. A large number of people, including the King Ridwan b. Tutush b. Alp Arslan were attracted to the Nizari madhhab. The author of Ta'rikh Halab says: "The hakim (i.e. da'i) was favourably inclined towards the batinii whose faith spread in Aleppo. Ridwan joined their party and defended them. They acquired great position and power in Aleppo and the city became a centre of their Da'wa ".

After the death of this able da'i the leadership of the Isma'ilis in Syria was taken over by two other da'is, Abu Tahir as-Sa'gh and Abu'l-Fath as-Sarmani. Hasan b. as-Sabbah had sent them to Syria to help the da'i at-Tabib al-Munajjim. The Nizari Da'wa began to attract in its fold a large number of sympathisers till the whole of Syria was full of them. They acquired many fortresses like those of Baniyas, al-Qadmus, al-Masyaf, ar-Sarqad; al-Muraqqab and many other towns and villages. In conclusion we can say that the activity of the Isma'ilis in Syria was as important as their activity in Persia and Khurasan, particularly as Rashid ad-Din Sinan followed the same line as that of Hasan and so did his successors after him.

Hasan also sent some eminent da'is to India who spread the mission widely and sowed the seeds of Nizari madhhab which later grew and flourished. As a result of this there came into existence the community of the Khojas, the followers of His Highness the Prince Aga Khan, the forty-eight Nizari Imam.

SECTION VI.

Hasan's Death.

After Hasan had organised the affairs of the Nizari Da'wa and established it firmly in Persia, Khurasan and Syria and introduced it in India, he retired to a literary life and took to writing his memoirs and autobiography. He kept on contributing works on the doctrines of the Isma'ili madhhab till he died in 518 H, when he was 90 years old. It is a great pity that the literary treasure that Hasan had built were destroyed by the savage Tatar attacks of Hulagu Khan who burnt all the Nizari Isma'ili works when he occupied Alamut in 650 H. This was all the more regrettable because it gave a fine opportunity to Hasan's enemies to write any nonsense against him; flood the world with false propaganda and concoct all sorts of stories and misrepresentations about Hasan. It was these lies that later became the sources of information for modern historians who attempted to write about Hasan and his followers.

Hasan's successors at Alamut:

When Hasan felt that the shadows of death were gradually closing upon him, he summoned to Alamut Kiya Buzurg Ummid who was at that time his representative in the fortress of Lamsir and was one of the big da'is who had proved to Hasan his sincerity, ability and capacity to sacrifice for the cause of the madhhab. Hasan asked Kiya Buzurg Ummid to sign a covenant and invested him with authority after him, saying: "Because of my high opinion of you, I ask you to obey the Imam of the time and enjoin upon you the service of the Isma'ili community. Be like my right hand and follow my example in obeying the commands of the Imam. Hold fast to the reins of this religious state with a firm hand. Do not give them up except by the orders of the Imam. I have chosen you from among many as the person fit for the task because I see in you faith, intelligence, courage and ability which you could use for the administration of the State".

Kiya Buzurg Ummid excelled in his work and fulfilled all the hopes that Hasan had reposed in him. The Isma'ili state progressed from strength to strength in his time. Its authority and influence was felt even in the remotest parts of Persia, Khurasan and Syria. The number of fortresses under Isma'ili control increased to seventy-four. Kiya Buzurg ruled in Alamut for 14 years following closely the policies of Hasan - political as well as religious.

He was succeeded by his son Kiya Muhammad being appointed by the Imam al-Muhtadi b. al-Imam al-Hadi b. al. Imam Nizar. Kiya Muhammad also followed the policies of Hasan and during his time the religious as well as the temporal authority was taken over by the Imams, the first of them being Imam al-Qahir followed by Imam al-Hasan Ala Zikrihi as-Salam. The Imams took full charge of the spiritual and temporal affairs of the Isma'ilis at Alamut in regular succession till the seventh century A. H. when the waves of Mongol attacks swept over the Islamic world and the Nizarid State, just like the other Islamic state, was wiped out. The Tatars occupied Alamut and burnt its precious library which contained all that Hasan wrote, by way of books, pamphlets and memoirs of his life. Thus, unfortunately a most valuable treasure of literature was barbarously destroyed.

On the Personality of Hasan.

Hasan b. as-Sabbah is one of those few great leaders who are very rarely born in this world and who astound the world and make it recognise their worth. He stands out unique by the pleasantness of his character among the other big Isma'ili leaders - nay among the leaders of Islam generally. By virtue of his exemplary character, Hasan could form his Nizari state in the midst of Sunni political and theological storms.

The greatest characteristic of Hasan was his far-sightedness which made his position in no way inferior to the position of kings and emperors. An example of this far-sightedness is his occupying strong fortresses on mountain-tops during the period of the migration of Isma'ilis. These fortresses made it easy for him to safeguard his power and save it from any calamity.

Another strong point in Hasan's character was his thoroughness and organisation. We have seen above, how he organised his community solidly and how it was responsible for its success in the sphere of politics, wars and the spread of the Da'wa. All the efforts of Hasan were crowned with success. Hasan's achievement was as great as that of Abu Abd Allah ash-Shi'i, the da'i responsible for the establishment of the Fatimid state in North Africa.

One of Hasan's characteristics was patience. He was calm and composed. He could overcome difficulties without getting perturbed by them. For example, when the ship that was carrying him from Egypt to Syria was tossed by violent storms in the Mediterranean, gloom and fear overshadowed travellers, but Hasan remained as calm as ever.

His fellow-travellers were astonished to find him so composed in face of difficulty. Truly, he

was a person who could overcome events and not allow them to overcome him. Another example of this characteristic of Hasan in his having withstood huge Saljuqid armies with only seventy of his followers and turning the tide of war from imminent defeat into glorious victory for his men. If there was any other person at the head of that small number of men, his strength and determination would have collapsed in front of those odds. But Hasan remained patient and this was the greatest reason of his success.

Hasan also distinguished himself in honesty of purpose and in piety and became the symbol of these qualities. His followers and family tried to follow his examples in these values of life. He had taught his daughter and women to earn their own living by weaving even though he was not himself poor and was in a position to support them. His ascetic piety is evidenced by the fact that he never moved out of Alamut for all his life except twice. He would pass his time in prayers and in compiling works on Isma'ili doctrine.

Due to these qualities, Hasan attained a position of glory and leadership so high that no da'i before or after him could ever reach it. No doubt the Nizari Da'wa spread in all parts of the East. Hasan could leave to his successors at Alamut a state, strong and firm, and a society well-knit with bonds of friendship and love.

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