

Hadith Recording during the Imamate of Imams Baqir and (.Sadiq (A.S

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The age of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir and Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq is considered the golden age as regards the spread of the rulings of the School of Recordation. During that age, Almighty Allah prepared certain political circumstances - that resulted in the collapse of a state (i.e. the Umayyad) and the emergence of another (i.e. the `Abbasid) - in which the ruling authorities were engaged. This matter opened wide the door for the followers of the School of

Recordation to write down, report, and present all that which they had without any fear. It was also natural that the Book of `Ali and the other books of the Ahl al-Bayt, in the capacity of their being the most ancient and the most authentic reference books on the Islamic knowledges, held the highest position and played the greatest role, because they were written during the age and on the order of the Holy Prophet who dictated them while Imam `Ali handwrote them, and Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Hasan, from whom Almighty Allah has removed uncleanness and purified thoroughly, retained them. Such characteristics cannot exist in any recording save the Holy Qur`an and the Sahifah of Imam `Ali.

Pursuant to and in view of this, we can understand the secret behind the fact that Imam Muhammad al-Baqir and Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq showed the Book of Imam `Ali to their disciples, to the adherents of the trend of prohibiting the recordation of the Hadith, and to the askers in generals. Mostly, the holy Imams used to present the Sahifah of Imam `Ali when disputes about controversial questions flared up. Nevertheless, they also referred to and presented the Sahifah even on ordinary occasions in order to increase the faith of their disciples. Of course, when such disciples would see with their own eyes the handwriting of Imam `Ali and the dictation of the Holy Prophet, their belief in their intellectual trend, that is originated from the Holy Sunnah, would increase. Yet, the most important point in this discussion is that the age of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir and Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq was characterized by the launch of scientific activities and the existence of large quantity of scholars, scientists, jurisprudents, and intellectuals.

It has been narrated that there were, in the age of the origination of the Islamic jurisprudential schools, four hundred narrators each of whom used to say, "(Imam) Ja`far ibn Muhammad narrated to me... etc." Thus, the holy Imam deemed necessary to refute the opposite opinion and to give greater value to the trend of the thorough compliance with the sacred texts over the

other trend of Opinionism and Ijtihad. Such preponderating could be done through the written evidence that perpetuated from the age of the Holy Prophet since the authenticity of such evidence is not exposed to any sort of criticism or refutation. For this reason, the holy Imams presented the Sahifah of Imam `Ali on many occasions so as to prove false the opposite opinions and to confirm that all what they were reporting from the Holy Prophet had never been

distorted, changed, or influenced by the political factors.

In this respect, it has been narrated that Imam Muhammad al-Baqir said to Zurarah: "O Zurarah: Beware of those who act upon analogy in the religious affairs. They have neglected the knowledge that they were commissioned to learn and have engaged themselves in learning the knowledge that has been already given to them. They are interpreting the traditions and forging fabrications against Almighty Allah since they are depending upon their fancies. Almighty Allah has said in this respect, 'Say: Has Allah commanded you, or do you forge a lie

against Allah?' [Holy Qur'an: 10/59]

I see coming that when one of these (who act upon analogy) is called from ahead, he answers from behind and when he is called from behind him, he answers from ahead. Thus have they strayed off and been confused in the lands and in the religion."^[1] As has been previously cited, it has been narrated that `Adhafir al-Sayrafiy said that he, accompanied by al-Hakam ibn `Utaybah, visited Abi-Ja`far (i.e. Imam Muhammad al-Baqir) and asked him many questions. Although the Imam used to honor him considerably, they disagreed about a certain question. Settling the dispute, Abi-Ja`far asked his son to bring him the Book of `Ali. Having been kept in a drawer, it was a handsome book through which Abi-Ja`far began to skim until he reached at the question involved. Referring to the book, Abi-Ja`far said, "This is the handwriting of (Imam) `Ali and the dictation of the Messenger of Allah." He then turned his face towards al-Hakam and said, "Wherever Salamah, Abu'l-Miqdam, and you go, you shall never find any people carrying the most authentic knowledge other than the people to whom (Archangel) Gabriel used to ascend (from the heavens)."^[2] The aforementioned narration proves that because al-Hakam ibn `Utaybah, Salamah ibn Kuhayl, and Abu'l-Miqdam were master scholars, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir used to honor them considerably. Supposing this, Muslim biographers have written nicely about these personalities. Likewise, the Imam took out the Sahifah of Imam `Ali after they had disagreed about a question in order to clarify it for them.

The statement, "it was a handsome book" confirms that the Book of Imam `Ali was very big and was considered an encyclopedia on the Islamic knowledge. The Ahl al-Bayt cared very much for that book; they therefore kept it in a drawer in order to maintain it and procure its safety.

According to another narration, Muhammad ibn Muslim is reported to have said, Abi-Ja`far (i.e. Imam Muhammad al-Baqir) opened before me a book (Sahifah), and the first sentence that caught my eyes was that "When a legator's heirs are his nephew and his grandfather, the inheritance is divided between them equally." I said to him, "May Allah accept me as ransom for you! Judges are not deciding anything of an inheritance to the nephew (of a legator) when the grandfather is existent." Imam Muhammad al-Baqir answered, "Verily, this book is written with the handwriting of `Ali according to the dictation of the Messenger of Allah." [3] So, the attention of Muhammad ibn Salamah was attracted to the religious ruling as he noticed that it had not been carried out by the judges whom were appointed by the ruling authorities. He therefore wanted to know the secret beyond that. Answering him, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir confirmed that the ruling on which his eyes fell was not recently recorded and thus it might have been exposed to oblivion, errancy, or distortion; rather it was found in a paper dictated by the Holy Prophet with the handwriting of Imam `Ali. As a result, the ruling was decisively free from distortion or mistake.

According to another narration, it has been narrated that Ibn `Uyaynah al-Basriy said that he was present when the following issue was put before Ibn Abi-Layla, the judge: Before his demise, a man had endowed one of his relatives a house without determining the time of the transfer of the possession. When the man departed life, his heirs as well as the man to whom that house was endowed attended before the judge, Ibn Abi-Layla, who commented, 'I think that the matter should be left as it had been during the lifetime of the legator.' Rather, Muhammad ibn Muslim al-Thaqafiy intruded saying, 'Verily, `Ali ibn Abi-Talib had decided the opposite of your decision in this very mosque.'

'What you do you know about this issue?' asked Ibn Abi-Layla.

Muhammad ibn Muslim al-Thaqafiy said, 'I have heard Abi-Ja`far (i.e. Imam Muhammad al-Baqir) saying that (Imam) `Ali ibn Abi-Talib decided to cancel the retention and carry out the inheritances.'

Ibn Abi-Layla asked, 'Can you prove this in a written form?'

'Yes, I can, ' answered Muhammad.

'You should thus bring me that written form, ' Ibn Abi-Layla said.

'I will do provided that you will not read except the paragraph intended, ' stipulated Muhammad.

'I will observe this, ' agreed Ibn Abi-Layla.

Hence, Muhammad ibn Muslim al-Thaqafiy showed the judge that narration in the book. He therefore objected the lawcase.[4] From the above-mentioned narration, we can conclude that

Ibn Abi-Layla, the judge, used to examine matters before issuing judgments; he knew that the wording of Muhammad ibn Muslim al-Thaqafi was not enough proof in itself and in the same way as Muhammad was jurisprudent, Ibn Abi-Layla was also jurisprudent in the same level; he therefore asked him, "What do you know about this issue?" Although the answer came that it was Imam Muhammad al-Baqir who had said so, the judge was not convinced with this answer; he therefore demanded with seeing that judgment in a written form (i.e. in a book) because he had, firstly, realized the significance of the reconditions and, secondly, he had heard about the Sahifah of `Ali and that was the best opportunity to be sure of the existence of such a book when his eyes would fall on it.

Furthermore, Muhammad ibn Muslim specified as a condition of seeing that book that Ibn Abi-Layla would not see any other item except that question involved. He thus confirmed that the disciples of the Ahl al-Bayt had been too careful to let that book or its contents and narrations fall in untrustworthy hands and it would thus be confused with personal opinions and then such opinions would be falsely ascribed to the Book of Imam `Ali causing the original narrations to be wasted and lost by people. If truth be told, Ibn Abi-Layla had submitted to the right, retracted his previous judgment, and issued a new judgment congruent with what had been mentioned in the Sahifah of `Ali. This case demonstrates the significance and benefit of the recordation of the Hadith. Had all the narrations and religious laws been recorded in this form, no difference between the Muslims would have ever been noticed except in a scanty amount.

It has been narrated on the authority of `Abd al-Malik that Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, once, ordered the Book of Imam `Ali to be brought to him. Having been folded like a thigh, the book was brought by Ja`far (i.e. Imam al-Sadiq). In the book it was written down that wives must have no share of their husbands' estates that are left as inheritance. Commenting on this, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir said, "I swear by Allah that this is the dictation of the Messenger of Allah and the handwriting of `Ali."^[5] It has been also narrated on the authority of Abi-Basir that he, once, asked Abi-Ja`far (Imam Muhammad al-Baqir) whether the testimony of adultery is permissible or not. The Imam's answer was negative. Abi-Basir, however, answered that al-Hakam ibn `Uyaynah claimed the opposite. The Imam thus said, "O Allah! Do not forgive him! Almighty Allah has not said to al-Hakam, 'And most surely it is a reminder for you and your people.' [Holy Qur'an: 43/44]

Let al-Hakam go left and right! By Allah I swear that (true) knowledge cannot be obtained from anyone save us, the Ahl al-Bayt, to whom Archangel Gabriel used to ascend (from the Heavens)."^[6]

It has been also narrated on the authority of Muhammad ibn Muslim that Imam Muhammad

al-Baqir said, "Verily, each and every item of truth and reality that is kept by any of the people must have been taken from us, the Ahl al-Bayt. Similarly, Amir al-Mu'minin `Ali ibn Abi-Talib is certainly the clue, source, basis, and spring of each and every decent and just issue that is decided by any of the people. However, when matters are confused for the people, it must be

their own fault; and when they are right, the source of this right must be `Ali ibn Abi-Talib."

[7] In addition, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir kept many other books that he had received from his forefathers as well as the choicest companions of the Holy Prophet. He also dictated very much of this knowledge to his students who wrote them down in books. In this respect, Muhammad `Ajjaj al-Khatib says, "Muhammad al-Baqir, son of `Ali ibn al-Husayn, (AH 56-114) wrote down many books some of which were received and spread by his son, Ja`far al-Sadiq." [8] `Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn `Aqil ibn Abi-Talib is reported to have said, "Abi-Ja`far (Imam Muhammad al-Baqir) and I used to visit Jabir ibn `Abdullah carrying clays on which we would write down." [9]

Obviously, the Holy Prophet must have ordered Jabir ibn `Abdullah to convey some of his instructions to Imam Muhammad al-Baqir. It has been also narrated on the authority of Abu'l-Jarrrad al-`Abdiy that Imam Muhammad al-Baqir had a book on the exegesis (Tafsir) of the Holy Qur'an [10] as his disciples kept many other books that they had received from him. [11]

[Furthermore, the majority of his disciples wrote down his narrations and sayings. [12]

Imam Ja`far Ibn Muhammad Al-Sadiq

As for Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq, he concentrated on the recordation of the religious knowledge as he, from time to time, used to show the Book of Imam `Ali to his companions and those who put religious questions before him as well as whenever a controversial question would be discussed.

In this regard, it has been narrated that Abi-Basir al-Muradiy, once, asked him about a question concerning the laws of inheritance. The Imam said, "Should I show you the question in the Book of `Ali?"

"Has the Book of `Ali been still existent?" wondered Abi-Basir.

Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq answered, "The Book of `Ali shall never be obliterated."

The Imam then took out a handsome book in which the following statement was written: "When the heirs of a man are his paternal and maternal uncle, the paternal uncle's share is two thirds of the inheritance while the maternal uncle's is one third." [13] Although he was one of the intimate friends and the devoted adherents of the Ahl al-Bayt, Abi-Basir believed that the Book of Imam `Ali had been obliterated due to Abi-Bakr's decision of the prohibition of the existence of the recordations, or the book would have been burnt with the other books of the

Sahabah that had been set to fire at the hands of `Umar ibn al-Khattab, or Mu`awiyah would have wiped the book out after the martyrdom of Imam `Ali. Nevertheless, Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq answered Abi-Basir unflinching, "The Book of `Ali shall never be obliterated." This statement demonstrates that the Book of `Ali has been the most precious thing for the Ahl al-Bayt; it is therefore impossible that it would be wiped out or lost; rather it is preserved with them as it is transmitted by inheritance from one to another.

Obviously, it was Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq who suggested to Abi-Basir that he would show him the Book of `Ali. This fact confirms that the Imam desired that the Book would occupy its proper place in the Muslim jurisprudence; he therefore very frequently showed and cared for it. Owing to his very much interest in the recordations and books, Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq was called Suhufiy, which means bookish or one who is interested in books. This title was loved by the Imam who used to say, "Yes, it is true! I am bookish. I have read the books of my forefathers - Abraham and Moses."^[14]

It has been also narrated on the authority of Abi-Basir that Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq said, "One day, some people from al-Basrah visited and asked me about narrations that they had written down. What is the thing that prevents you from writing down? Verily, you shall not learn unless you write down."^[15]

Supporting the aforesaid fact that the Holy Imams paid great attention to the questions of the laws of inheritance, judicature, and legal testimonies, it has been narrated that Muhammad ibn Muslim asked Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq about the amount of the knowledge that has been inherited whether it is general items of knowledge or the interpretation of all the matters about which people are talking, such as the laws of divorce and the shares of inheritance. The Imam answered, "Verily, (Imam) `Ali had written down all the items of knowledge including the laws of divorce and the shares of inheritance... etc."^[16]

As noticed in this narration, Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq, having referred to the entire knowledge, mentioned in particular the laws of divorce and the shares of inheritances. In other words, the Imam mentioned the particular cases after the general. This is an obvious indication to the fact that big distortion and deformation had occurred to these two sections of the Muslim jurisprudence. As has been previously cited, `Umar ibn al-Khattib ignored the majority of the religious laws in general and the laws of the share of grandmothers and the Kalilah (those who leave no descendants or ascendants as heirs) in particular. He also used to rest upon the judgments of the others, such as Imam `Ali ibn Abi-Talib. The Holy Imams thus cared for showing the Book of Imam `Ali especially in the field of the religious laws appertained to the shares of inheritance and divorce because distortion and confusion had occurred to these two

fields.

Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq took pride in his having in possession the Sahifah of Imam `Ali and the al-Jafr that comprised the hidden knowledge of the Holy Prophet. It has been narrated on the authority of `Abdullah ibn Sinin that Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq said when we mentioned before him

the activities of the descendants of Imam al-Hasan and also the al-Jafr:

“By Allah I swear; we keep two papers made of skins of goat and sheep. These two papers comprise the dictation of the Messenger of Allah with the handwriting of (Imam) `Ali. We also keep a paper that is seventy cubit length comprising the dictations of the Messenger of Allah with the handwriting of (Imam) `Ali. It includes all that which may be needed even matters that

are as minute as the retaliation of scratching.”[17]

By virtue of the abovementioned, Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq was the pyramid head in the recordational construction of the Holy Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt. Likewise, he mainly depended upon the Book of Imam `Ali and the books of his forefathers that they had received from the Holy Prophet as well as the books of the Prophets and Messengers that they had obtained in inheritance.

Surprisingly, the followers of the other school of the prohibition of recording the Hadith criticized the school of the Ahl al-Bayt until recent ages regarding the dependence upon the previous generations as the true knowledge while the dependence upon the sacred texts as dishonor. In this regard, Abi-Hanifah used to criticize Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq for his having rested upon the recorded knowledge, while the latter used to say, “What do they want from you and what for are they criticizing you? By Allah I swear; we have in possession the thing that makes us dispense with all the people while they are in need for us. Verily, we have the book that comprises the dictations of the Messenger of Allah written with the handwriting of (Imam) `Ali; a paper that is seventy cubit length in which all the lawful and the unlawful are written.”[18]

Both the Sunnite and Sha`ite Muslims knew about the books that Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq had had in inheritance from his father and forefathers and then dictated to his disciples. Ibn `Adiy says, “Ja`far kept many Hadiths and copies of books. He is one of the trustworthy people in the words of Yahy? ibn Mu`in.”

`Amr ibn Abi`l-Miqdam also says, “If you look at him, you will realize that Ja`far ibn Muhammad belongs to the lineage of the Prophets.”[19]

Quoting the words of Ibn Hajar in Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, Muhammad `Ajjaj al-Khatib says, “Ja`far al-Sadiq, the son of Muhammad al-Baqir, (AH 80-148) kept many epistles, Hadiths, and copies of books. He was one of the most trustworthy reporters of Hadith.”[20]

As a matter of fact, Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq represents the most excellent mentality among the

Muslims during that time. Out of his unparalleled dexterity, he realized the menacing danger that threatened the Muslims as regards the significance of the recordation of the religious knowledge. In this respect, he said to al-Mufaddal ibn `Umar al-Ju`afiy, "Write down and spread your knowledge among your brethren-in-faith. Before you die, give your books in inheritance to your sons, for I see coming that an age will come upon people during which nothing will entertain them save their books."^[21] This is the very interconnection and continuity that are found with the Holy Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt; in the same way as Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtabi ordered his followers to write down the religious knowledge when they would be prevented from reporting the Hadith as a result of the Umayyad intellectual terrorism, Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq carried the same idea urging on paying very much attention to the recordations since he lived in an age that was similar to that of the Umayyad dynasty and the same tragedy would be about to take place again though in another form. The prohibition of the Hadith was about to reach its climax during the reigns of the `Abbasid rulers, but those rulers had to build good relations with the neighboring nations, such as the Persians, the Turks, and others, and they lived in noticeable opulence, especially during the reigns of al-Mansur and al-Rashid. These reasons diverted the people from paying considerable attention to the religious knowledge; rather they devoted themselves to the fields of amusement and impudence as well as other secondary items of knowledge. Moreover, the psychological and doctrinal connections became difficult and the attainment of the genuine knowledge with the existence of such choppy waves was hardly possible.

In view of that, Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq gave attention to the necessity of keeping the recordations of the religious knowledge so that people would seek the light of these books during the murks of policy and controversies. Moreover, Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq and his disciples are reported to have never wasted any moment that would be used for recording the religious knowledge. It has been narrated that he once asked one of his disciples, "I know that you cannot memorize; where is your friend who writes down for you?" The man answered that his friend might have been engaged in a matter that prevented him from presence there. The Imam thus asked another man to write down for him.^[22]

All the words of Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq were written down by his disciples who kept them in books. He also wrote down many epistles refuting the false claims of the atheists,<sup>[23]</sup> and answering the questions of `Abdullah al-Najashiy (the governor of al-Ahwaz, southern Iran).^[24] He also wrote down an elucidation of the religious laws entitled al-Ja`fariyyat or al-Ash`athiyyat because the reporter was ibn al-Ash`ath. It has been also narrated that Yahya ibn Sa`ad said that Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq dictated to him a lengthy Hadith concerning the rulings

Notes:

- [1] Shaykh al-Mufid: al-Amiliy 12:51 as mentioned in al-Hurr al-`Amiliy: Wasa'il al-Shi'ah 27:59, H. 43.
- [2] Al-Najashiy: al-Rijal 360 No. 966.
- [3] Shaykh al-Kulayniy: al-Kafi 7:112.
- [4] Shaykh al-Sadiq: Ma`ani al-Akhbar 219-220.
- [5] Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Saffar: Basa'ir al-Darajat 165.
- [6] Shaykh al-Kulayniy: al-Kafi 1:400; Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Saffar: Basa'ir al-Darajat 9.
- [7] Shaykh al-Mufid: al-Amaliy 64.
- [8] Muhammad `Ajjaj al-Khatib: al-Sunnah qabl al-Tadwin 354-355.
- [9] Al-Khatib al-Baghdadiy: Taqyid al-`Ilm 104.
- [10] Ibn al-Nadim: al-Fihrist 36; Sayyid Hasan al-Sadr: Ta'sis al-Shi'ah li-'Ulum al-Islam 327; Asad Haydar: al-Imam al-Sadiq wa'l-Madhahib al-Arba`ah 1:552.
- [11] Al-Najashiy: al-Rijal 151 No. 396, 397 - pp. 178 No. 468; Sayyid Hasan al-Sadr: Ta'sis al-Shi'ah li-'Ulum al-Islam 285.
- [12] For example, refer to Ibn Shu`bah al-Harraniy: Tuhaf al-`Uqul.
- [13] Shaykh al-Kulayniy: al-Kafi 7:119; Shaykh al-Tusiy: Tahdhib al-Ahkam 9:324.
- [48] Shaykh al-Sadiq: `Ilal al-Shara'i` 5:89. It is well known that the Holy Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt had acquaintance with the knowledge of the Prophets as they kept their books. (See Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Saffar: Basa'ir al-Darajat)
- [15] Al-Borujerdiy: Jami` Ahadith al-Shi'ah; 1:298; Kitab `Asim ibn Hamid al-Hannat 33.
- [16] Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Saffar: Basa'ir al-Darajat 164.
- [17] Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Saffar: Basa'ir al-Darajat 165.
- [18] Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Saffar: Basa'ir al-Darajat 149.
- [19] Ibn Hajar al-`AsqAliniy: Tahdhib al-Tahdhib 2:104.
- [20] Muhammad `Ajjaj al-Khatib: al-Sunnah qabl al-Tadwin 358.
- [21] Shaykh al-Kulayniy: al-Kafi 1:42 H. 11.
- [22] Al-Tabariy: DAl'i'l al-Imamah 308.
- [23] Agha Buzurg al-Tahraniy: al-Dhari`ah 2:484. These epistles have been recorded by Shaykh al-Majlisiy in Bihar al-Anwar 3:152-196.
- [24] This epistle has been recorded by Ibn Zahrah al-Halabiy in al-Arba`in 46 H. 6.
- [25] Ibn Hajar al-`AsqAliniy: Tahdhib al-Tahdhib 2:103