

IMAM JAFAR AL-SADIQ (A.S)

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“Never has the eye seen, nor the ear heard, nor the heart of a human being thought of anyone more virtuous, knowledgeable, devout, or pious than Ja’far al-Sadiq.”

Imam Malik bin Anas

In Manaqib Aale Abu Talib of Ibne Shahre Aaashob

“Whenever I looked at Ja’far bin Muhammad, I knew he was from Prophet’s ancestry.”

Umar bin al-Miqdam

Al Hilya of Abu Nai’m

This book is dedicated for the Isale Sawaab of
Adam Ali Mulla Ibrahim Jee
Fatima Bint Ali Bader
Batul Bint Shaikh Mohammed Ali
Alibhai Adam Ali
Sugra Bint Adam Ali
Please recite Surah Fateha for the Departed Soul

Introduction

Praise be to Allah, the One and only God. Peace and the blessings of Allah be on Muhammad, the Lord of His servants, Ahlul-Bait, the Boat of salvation, the leaders of guidance from among his companions, and all those who supported and helped him, treaded the right path, and did not deviate.

The care the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w) lavished on his household, expressed in their education and upbringing, was not an emotional concern so much as an implementation of a decisive Divine order which he received from the Lord of the Worlds. He communicated the message, and brought mankind out of the darkness of atheism and polytheism into the light of monotheism and faith. Allah ordered His Messenger (s.a.w.) to say to the successive generations of mankind,

“...say (Muhammad): I demand not of you any recompense for it save the love of (my) relatives...”

Holy Qur’an (42:23)

Alas, they were compensated by being killed, tortured, and made homeless. Patiently and steadfastly they, along with their followers, faced tribulations and bitter trials in a heartrending way.

Some people stood against them out of ignorant spite, personal interests, trivial worldly gains, and in revenge for the killing of Abu-Jahl and Abu-Lahab. Up to now, the grandsons of the enemies of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) are still harbouring ill intentions against them. They may express their deep-seated hatred for Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) with their writings or through their followers. There were people who pretended to be loyal to Ahlul-Bait (a.s.). At the same time, they fabricated myths and lies and attributed to Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) fables and incredible stories about the unseen, which they were innocent of, until the Imams (a.s.) frankly said:

“By Allah, those who opposed us out of their hatred are not more harmful for us than those who ascribed to us what we never said about ourselves.”

The greatness of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) is manifested in their possession of “the honour of Islam.” They are of noble birth, descending from Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w). They were the most knowledgeable, being educated in the Prophetic school. And they had the honour of jihad, as they were patiently victimized and martyred.

Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (a.s.), a branch of this big tree, the symbol of this pure household, perpetuated the message of his grandfather the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.), by spreading Islamic sciences, and teaching fiqh and traditions.

In the life of Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) one can clearly see the call to justice before the tyrants, the announcement of right before the unjust and falsehood, and the heroic, wonderful steadfastness against the horrors of deviation and darkness.

In spite of all this, the flow of his knowledge filled the great scholars of Basrah, Kufah and central Hijaz with enlightenment. He illuminated the minds of such great leaders as Malik bin Anas, Abu-Hanifah, Ibn Uyaynah, Ibn Jurayh, Yahya bin Sa’d al-Ansari, Ayyub al-Sajistani, and many others who lived at that time.

As Al-Balagh Foundation presents, to its dear readers, this fragrant glimpse of the life of the Apostle's grandson, the standard - bearer of his message, the renewer of Islam, the perpetuator of the originality of his call, Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.). We beseech Allah to grant us success to call people to obey Him, lead the way in preaching the faith until Islam prevails, by which He may reward us with honour in this life and the hereafter. He is the Hearing and the Knowing.

Al-Balagh Foundation

AN APPROACH TO THE STUDY

Writing about Imam al-Sadiq bin Muhammad al-Sadiq (a.s.), the Imam of Muslims, the master of jurisprudence (fuqaha) and preachings, and the authority of scholars and intellectuals, is writing about a leading man from Ahlul-Bait (a.s.). He is a link in the chain of Imamate and the political and ideological leadership in the life of Muslims.

Introducing the Imam (a.s.) to the readers, specially those who know nothing about him, is part of the process of acquainting them with Ahlu-Bait (a.s.). A study of the life of any of the Imam (a.s.), from the household of the Prophet (a.s.w.), would disclose the common denominator in their lives and harmonious continuity of their role as the choice of Muslims' Imams.

This brief study emphasizes, for the researchers interested in the lives of the Imams of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.), that they have made a single history with clearly defined dimensions and roles perfectly assigned across successive periods of time throughout their lifetimes. Their mission was aimed at keeping the originality of Shari'ah and defending its entity. This will become crystal-clear through the concise study of the life of Imam Ja'far bin Muhammad al-Sadiq (a.s.).

Since the study of any of the Islamic personalities, such as that of Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.), centers on the practical value of his personality, its ideological and historical role in the lives of Muslims in particular, and mankind in general, we have focussed, our study on this fact. We have tried to present a good, clearcut portrait of Imam Ja'far bin Muhammad al-Sadiq (a.s.). We have divided the study into three main areas: Character, political conditions, and scholarly Status.

CHARACTER OF IMAM AL-SADIQ (A.S.)

1. His Birth and Upbringing:

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.) is the son of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir bin Ali al-Sajjad bin Hussein (a.s.) bin Ali Abi-Talib (a.s.). The Imam is a descendent of Fatimah al-Zahra, the daughter of the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.) and Imam Ali bin Abi Talib, through Imam Hussein, the martyred grandson of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.).

The mother of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.) is Fatimah¹, the daughter of al-Qasim bin Muhammad bin Abi-Bakr. That is why Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Abu-Bakr begot me twice."

As most authentic books insist, he was born in the city of Madinah, on the 17th day of the lunar month Rabi'ul Awwal², in the year 83 A. H, during the rule of the Umayyad caliph, Abdul-Malik bin Marwan.

Imam Ja'far bin Muhammad (a.s.) was born and brought up under the care of his father, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.), and his grandfather Imam Ali bin Hussein (Zain al-Abideen) (a.s.). From both men he learned the sciences of religion and the teachings of the Islam.

After the martyrdom of Imam Zain al-Abideen (a.s.), Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) was the Imam of Muslims. Before his martyrdom, he passed the Imamate to Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.). He became the authority of judges, scholars and preachers.

He graduated hundreds of scholars versed in Islamic sciences and Prophetic traditions. He made the mosque of Madinah a university to spread Islamic ideology. Scholars and preachers gave their testimonies in acknowledgement of his great standing and abundant knowledge.

On the authority of Ata', a well-known scholar from the second generation, Sibt bin al-Jawzi says in his book Tadhkirat al-Khawarizmi (Admonishing Prominent people):

"Never have I seen scholars less knowledgeable in the presence of a man like Abu-Ja'far al-Sadiq..."³

Ibn Sa'd says:

"He was trustworthy, knowledgeable and the communicator of a plethora of traditions"⁴

If we understood the status of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.), under whose care Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) was brought up and from whom he learned the teachings of Islam, and if we understand, through our study of the lives of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.), that Imam al-Baqir (a.s.), was brought up and taught Islamic sciences by his father, Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.), that Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.) was nurtured by his father, Imam Hussein (a.s.), and that Imam Hussein (a.s.) was brought up and taught Islamic sciences by his father, the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali bin Abi-Talib (a.s.), and that Imam Ali bin Abi-Talib was brought up and taught by the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.), we could see a greater meaning in his saying:

*"I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate. Whoever seeks knowledge, let him enter through the gate."*⁵

Imam Ali (a.s.) is also praised by A'ishah, the wife of the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.), with these words:

“...He is certainly the most well-versed man in the Sunnah of the prophet” (reported by Abu-Umar).⁶

If we could understand the transfer of knowledge from one Imam to the next, we would realize knowledge, one from the other, from the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.), and that their family life was framed with the same abundant knowledge, deep faith and morals. This understanding would lead us to the following facts:

A. The authenticity of the traditions, beliefs, teachings, Qur’anic exegesis, philosophy, etc., which the Imams of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) had conveyed to the people.

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) explained this truth in these words:

“I heard the traditions I communicate to you from my father. My father heard them from my grandfather. My grandfather heard them from his father. His father heard them from Ali bin Abi-Talib. Ali bin Abi-Talib heard them from the Apostle of Allah. And what traditions the Apostle of Allah had conveyed are the exact words of Allah, the Almighty and Most High.”⁷

B. Their lives, a chain of connected, interacted links, with no gap in between or a foreign factor piercing it, are directly tied up with the life of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.). Thus, their lives were, in fact, a school and a vivid experience in which Islam was personified, its teachings implemented, and its principles defended. That all adds up to the authenticity of the source from which they took their knowledge and the originality of the thought of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.).

If we understand all this, we would come closer to the atmosphere, environment, and the school in which Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (a.s.) studied. We would know beyond doubt that his life, the services he rendered to the Muslims, and the knowledge he imparted, including hadith, exegesis, and Islamic beliefs, was faithfully and objectively handed down from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.).

This would explain to us the great standing of Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.), his ascension to Imamate after his father Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.), and his determination to take up that heavy burden throughout his blessed life.

2. His Social Status:

No other man had won the same great and high position that Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (a.s.) had won during that time.

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) had a special and unique status in the eyes of the people at the time. The common people looked at him as a descendant of the Apostle of Allah (a.s.), chief of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.), and the symbol of the opposition to the injustice and tyranny of the Umayyad and Abbasids. These common people believed that it was an obligation for every Muslim, loyal to Ahlul-Bait (a.s.), to love him and be faithful to him.

The men of knowledge and piety saw in Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (a.s.), a leader, scholar and an unmatched educator. The politicians and rulers knew full well the Imam, particularly at the time of the Abbasid revolt against the Umayyads. He was, in their sight, a great social personality, an effective political force, and a leading political magnet which could not be ignored. These are facts no one can deny or undermine.

During the life of Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.), at the closing years of the Umayyad rule, the ruler got more tough and unjust. People's rage rose. It was only natural, as history asserts, that Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) was at the fore, being at the vanguard, and the motto on the banners of the masses in every uprising against the Umayyads and Abbasids. That is why the anti-Umayyad action began in the name of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.). The leaders of the opposition announced that they were calling for the restoration of the caliphate and Imamate to their legitimate people, the members of the pure Prophetic household. They called for the restitution of the caliphate to the qualified and competent descendants of Fatimah, the daughter of the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w). But, while the struggle was on, and the tensions were mounting between the two parties, Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) distanced himself from the battlefield. He withdrew from open confrontation because he knew in advance, the final outcome. The slogans were false, the call was unreal, and Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) would fall victim to them. Certain as he was of the real intentions of the Abbasids. He advised the Alawites not to follow the raised slogans rashly.

Events turned out exactly as he had said. What he had been warning the Alawites of took place. Though he was refraining from taking part in the struggle, the concerned people kept themselves close to him. The people were all waiting for him to take part. The leaders of the Abbasids couldn't ignore him or overlook his social position. That is why they took him into consideration while planning their strategy.

Abu-Salamah al-Khallal, a key leader of the revolt against the Umayyads, sent a messenger to Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) offering him his pledge of allegiance. Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) burned his letter and turned down his offer. Al-Khallal tried many times to offer his loyalty to the Imam to no avail. The Alawites offered him the caliphate and kept pressurising him, but he resisted all those temptations in spite of the Alawites' persistence. Naturally, the concern the people showed to the Imam (a.s.) emphasized his great political stature and the prominent social role he played.

Abu-Ja'far al-Mansoor, the Abbasid caliph, was an avowed enemy of the Imam (a.s.). He maltreated him, sent for him many times and accused him of acting against the Abbasids and conducting a covert conspiracy against him. In spite of all that, this caliph could but admit the great status of Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.). In his response to a letter sent by the Alawite revolutionary, Dhil-Nafs al-Zakiyyah Muhammad bin Abdullah bin al-Hassan bin al-Hassan bin Ali bin Abi-Talib - in which he explained his outstanding merits which made him outrank al-Mansoor as more qualified to be the caliph than him due to his closeness to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) and as a descendant of his daughter, Fatimah al-Zahra', al-Mansoor said:

"...the best sons of your father, and those with outstanding merits are certainly the sons of the bondsmen. After the demise of the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.) nobody better than Ali bin al-Hussein was born in your family. He was the child of a bondsmaid. And certainly he is better than your grandfather, Hassan bin Hussein.⁸ After him you had nobody like Muhammad bin Ali (Imam al-Baqir) whose grandmother was a bondsmaid. He is surely better than your father.

Nor had you anybody like his son, Ja'far (Imam al-Sadiq) whose grandmother is a bondsmaid. He is better than you..."⁹ Isma'il bin Ali bin Abdullah bin Abbas is reported to have said:

"One day I called on Abu-Ja'far al-Mansoor. Tears were flowing down his beard. He said to me: 'Have you heard of what happened to your family?' 'And what is that, O commander of the faithful, I queried? Their chief, the scholar and the best of the remaining pious among them has passed away. And who is that, commander of the faithful' I queried?'. 'Ja'far bin Muhammad, he said.'"¹⁰

And so we understand from historical documents how great the political and social position of the Imam was. He stood at the top of the social hierarchy and was the central force and the magnet of his era.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS AT THE TIME OF IMAM AL-SADIQ (A.S.)

Political conditions, at any historical phase, appear to be the most dominant phenomenon of social life of human beings. That is because political conditions, the relations between the ruler and the ruled, the nature of the ruling power, the policies it adopts, are all closely connected to the security of the people, their living standards, the level of their faith, lifestyle, education, scientific progress and their inner stability. Political conditions become of high importance and their impact deepens especially when a given community holds onto a civilized mission, and to the political values and principles they believe in, but which are being pushed aside by the rulers who seized power by force.

Through the study of the history of the Muslim ummah, throughout the first six centuries during the Umayyad and Abbasid hegemony, the driving factors working at the depth of the Islamic culture attended by struggles, activities, revolutions and reforms, one can clearly detect three key factors:

1. Islam's ability to renovate, create and give, at the levels of culture, originality of religious beliefs, political militancy, and protection of man's freedom and dignity against injustice and tyranny.

2. Rulers. deviation from Islam. There is a wide gap between Islam's principles and the ruling authorities. But there was an interval in which Umar bin Abdul-Aziz, an Umayyad caliph, tried to come to grips with the tragical condition of the ummah by detecting the causes of decay. Unfortunately, he failed to achieve lasting change.

3. During these two distinguished eras, we discover how energetic the Muslim ummah was in facing the rulers deviating from Islam. In this long, drawn out struggle, the role of the noble Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) appears as an indisputable historical fact. Ahul-Bait (a.s.) were themselves the leaders who guided the opposition. That is why they were persecuted, killed, tortured and made homeless at the hands of the Umayyad and Abbasid rulers.

Imam Ja'far bin Muhammad al-Sadiq (a.s.) lived with these three factors. He witnessed the oppression, terrorism and injustices directed at Muslims in general, and the Alawites, who descended from Imam Ali (a.s.), and Fatimah al-Zahra', (a.s.) in particular, for the last forty years of the Umayyad rule.

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) was born in the days of the Umayyad caliph Abdul-Malik bin Marwan bin al-Hakam. He lived through the reigns of al-Walid bin Abdul-Malik, Sulaiman bin Abdul-Malik, Umar bin Abdul-Aziz, al-Walid bin Yazid, Yazid bin al-Walid, Ibrahim bin al-Walid, Marwan al-Himar, until the collapse of the Umayyad caliphate in 132 A. H. He lived under the reign of Abul-Abbas al-Saffah, the first Abbaside caliph, and nearly ten years under the reign of Abu-Ja'far al-Mansoor. The Imam (a.s.) lived through hard times, witnessed the tribulations of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.), felt the pains of the ummah, and heard its complaints and cries, but was unable to move to their defence. He could not openly challenge the Umayyads or the Abbasids because of the following reasons:

1. He was at the top ideological and social structure, the chief of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.), and the man to whom the ummah resorted at times of adversity. Therefore he was under constant surveillance by the Umayyads and Abbasids. Spies followed him, reporting to the authorities the slightest of his activities. That weakened his ability to indulge in political actions aimed at destroying the successive rulers at the time.

2. Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) had a painfully bitter experience with the masses. All the uprisings and revolts led by Imam Ali (a.s.), his sons, Imam Hassan (a.s.), and Imam Hussein (a.s.), had been crushed due to the ineptitude of the ummah and its reluctance to respond to Ahlul-Bait's calls. Moreover, Ahlul-Bait would not even consider using such base ways to seize power as treachery, hypocrisy, bribery, etc. But, their foes, on the contrary, would not leave a stone unturned to achieve their mean goals. Such wide gaps in political awareness and disharmony between Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) and their followers had the greatest harmful effect on the battles and uprisings led by them.

For these reasons Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) renounced open political struggle with the rulers and embarked, clandestinely, on building the resistance ideologically and morally in a way that would make it the embodiment of revolution. The revolution would have to be cared for, away from the rulers' eyes so as to send its roots deep in the consciousness of the ummah.

Thus, he made the scholars, preachers and the masses boycott and oppose the unjust rulers through raising the religious and political awareness of the ummah, guiding them to learn Islam's beliefs and concepts, and enlightening them concerning their relations with the rulers. He is reported to have said:

“Whoever condemns the injustice of an oppressor, Allah shall certainly place someone above him, who will persecute him. If he prays to Allah, Allah shall neither accept his prayer, nor shall He reward him in compensation for the injustices done to him.”¹¹

“The one who does injustices to others, the one who assists him in doing so, and the one who approves of that, are three accomplices.”¹²

During the lifetime of Imam Ja'far bin Muhammad (a.s.) three momentous events took place which had an extraordinary effect on the life of the ummah:

1. Uprising of Zaid (121 A.H.):

Zaid bin Ali bin Hussein bin Ali bin Abi-Talib (a.s.), is the paternal uncle of Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.). Zaid was a leading man from the household of the Prophet (s.a.w.), and a famous faqih from Ahlul-Bait (a.s.). He was unbearably distressed by the continuing dilemma of the ummah, the terror, oppression and deviation practiced by the Umayyad rulers. Thus, he rushed with the courage of the revolutionary who saw no alternative to the sword and force in dealing with the rulers. He declared war on the Umayyad authorities. In 121 A.H. he decided to lead the oppressed and downtrodden in a revolt against the Umayyad caliph, Hisham bin Abdul-Malik. That took place during the Imamate of Imam al-Baqir (a.s.), Zaid's brother. Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) was 38 years old at that time. Deteriorating conditions,

injustices, poverty, corruption and the extravagances of the rulers were so widespread that they were no longer endurable.

Historians present a good description of the deteriorating conditions. Abul-Hassan al-Mas'ood, the well-known historian, depicts Hisham in the following word: "He was cross-eyed, rough, rude, stiff-necked. He was busy amassing wealth..."¹³

Then he adds: "In his days silk and silken garments were made. All the people in his days followed his example and became stingy. Help to the needy decreased, and charities were stopped. No hard time were ever seen like those of his."¹⁴

Quoting al-Jahshiyari, Sayyid Hashim Ma'roof al-Hassani writes:

"The Umayyads imposed extra taxes such as those who lived on industries and handicrafts and on the people who wanted to marry or write contracts and documents. They restored the Sassanid taxes known as Nowrooz gifts. The first man who imposed them was Mu'awiyah. He levied them on the people of Iraq. The chief of the people of Harat met Asad bin Abdullah al-Qisri, the governor of Harat under Hisham bin Abdu l-Malik, and presented to him the gifts of the great festival.

They amounted to 1000,000, according to Ibn al-Athir, in the fifth volume of his book Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh (The complete Accounts of History)..."

He also says, "Abdul-Malik ordered his governor of al-Jazirah to make a general census of the people, and consider all the people as workers devoid of the right to have property. He also instructed him to make everyone collect his whole product during one year, set aside a portion for his maintenance. The governor did so and considered them workers at certain wages. From their annual income, he put aside a sum of money for their daily expenses and clothing for one year. He found that for each one of them remained four Dinars. He obliged them to pay it."

He further says:

"Usamah bin Zaid called on Sulaiman bin Abdul-Malik who was carrying with him the land tax revenues. Usamah, the governor of Egypt, said:

'O commander of the faithful! I have not come to you until after (I have seen). If you think it better to treat them kindly, comfort them and lessen the amount of land tax which they pay, in order to build and renovate their country, and improve their living, then do it. That would be made up for next year.' "May your mother be bereaved of you! Milk the milk. If it stop, then milk the blood, was his reply." Sometimes, the caliphs would allow their governors to keep all the money. It might amount to millions of Dirhams. The governor of Khurasan gathered 20 million Dirhams. The caliph let him keep them similar offers of money were presented to him."¹⁵

Such was the economic life. The distribution of wealth, which was contrary to Islam's economic principles and fair laws, was further aggravated by the policy of terror, hunting down and killing the political opponents of the rulers. Imam al-Sadiq, like his father and grandfathers, witnessed all this under the Umayyad rule.

That was one reason that prompted Zaid bin Ali to revolt against the Umayyads. He chose Kufah as the base for his uprising and “stayed there nearly a year and sent his messengers to different towns...”¹⁶

“... the Shi’ites, along with other people, began to contact him and give their pledge of allegiance to him. His office counted fifteen thousand men from Kufah, not to mention those who came from the cities of Mada’in, Basrah, Wasit, Mosul, Khurasan, Ray and Gorgan.”¹⁷

This historical document reflects the fury of the ummah at the Umayyads, and the widespread discontent in the majority of the main Muslim cities. One can only have a glimpse at the conduct of the Umayyad rulers, about which we have written elsewhere, and the nature of the uprisings and the men who led them so as to prove the unIslamic, brutal nature of the Umayyad rulers. Zaid, the revolutionary, for example, is described by Abul-Jarood in these words:

“I arrived in Madinah and whenever I asked about Zaid bin Ali it was said to me: ‘That is the ally of the Qur’an.’”¹⁸

Al-Tabari described him as being:

“A worshipper, pious, generous and brave,”¹⁹

Zaid was supported by Abu-Hanifah al-Nu’mān bin Thabit, the founder of the Hanafi school of thought. Abu-Hanifah leaned toward him and issued a religious decree allowing people to give the tax of poor-rates (zakat) in the cause of Zaid. As a result he stood trial and was greatly harmed. Many historians and writers emphasized this point. Mr. Muhammad Isma’il Ibrahim, for example, who wrote about the political role and the view of the faqih of the Hanafi school in the Umayyad rule, Zaid’s uprising, and Ahlul-Bait’s right to the caliphate, says:

“He (Abu-Hanifah) disapproved of the Umayyads’ illegal seizure of the office of caliphate, and usurping power with the force of the sword and cunningness. So, deep in his heart, he was leaning to Ali bin Abi-Talib and his sons who fell victim to the Umayyads’ injustice and oppression. Most painful for was the murdering of Zaid bin Ali Zain al-Abideen, who was, in his view, a just Imam qualified for caliphate for his outstanding merits. Abu-Hanifah remained loyal to Ahlul-Bait and hostile to the Umayyads to the point that he rejected every offer to occupy a post in their government. Occasionally he would make public his leaning towards the Alawites in his lectures, which infuriated Ibn Hubairah, the governor of Kufah. He kept a watchful eye on Abu-Hanifah and tried to find fault with any of his activities so as to punish him. The opportunity arose when he appointed him a judge.

When Abu-Hanifah refused, Ibn Hubairah considered that a sign of disloyalty to the state and beat him and threw him in prison. With the help of the jailer, Abu-Hanifah escaped and took refuge in Mecca, where he settled. He remained there until the foundation of the Abbasid state. When the new rule asserted itself, he returned to Kufah.”²⁰ In these harsh conditions, Zaid decided to declare war on the rulers and hurry to Kufah. All the people attached their hopes to the uprising of Zaid, urging him to listen to their call and start the revolt.

Zaid did not want to install himself as the caliph and Imam of the people. He merely called for the restoration of power to Ahlul-Bait (a.s.). Zaid knew that his brother, Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) was the legitimate Imam of that era. He talked about the matter with him and sought his advice. He intended to surrender power to him once the uprising succeeded. Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) told him that traditions coming down from his forefathers, quoted from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), specified the duration of the Umayyad rule, and that he would surely be killed if he rose up against Hisham bin Abdul-Malik.

Al-Mas'oodi, writes:

“Zaid bin Ali had consulted his brother, Abu-Ja'far (al-Baqir) bin Ali bin Hussein (a.s.). He advised him not to trust the people of Kufah, as they were deceitful and treacherous: ‘In Kufah your grandfather, Ali bin Abi-Talib, was murdered’, al-Baqir (a.s.) said to him. ‘And in it your uncle Hassan was stabbed, and your father Hussein was slain. In it and its villages we, Ahlul-Bait, were reviled. He told him about the duration of the reign of the sons of Marwan and the foundation of the Abbasid state. Zaid, however, was not convinced and insisted on seeking to restore Ahlul-Bait’s right to the caliphate. Finally al-Baqir said to him: ‘I fear, brother, that you, yourself, will be crucified tomorrow in the square of Kufah. , Abu-Ja'far took farewell of him, telling him that they would never see each other again.’”²¹

How truthful the words of Imam al-Baqir (a.a.) were! Zaid revolted, was killed in Kufah, and secretly buried by his followers. Hisham bin Abdul-Malik ordered the body of Zaid be taken out of the grave and crucified after being stripped of its clothes. That order was instantly carried out. The murder and crucifixion of Zaid, the Martyr, was a horrible event which shook the conscience of the Muslim ummah, inflamed the sentiments, kindled the spark of the Umayyads downfall. The Umayyads remained in power only 11 years after the killing of Zaid. That period witnessed many uprisings and revolts led by men from the noble Prophet’s household.

That tragedy and the likes of it, which deeply saddened Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) and the ummah left their marks on the Imam (a.s.) and affected his political and social activities. He turned his attention to promoting knowledge, protecting the Shari’ah and raising a generation of scholars, well-educated in Islamic sciences, jurisprudence (fiqh) and Prophetic traditions (Hadiths). As his freedom was extremely restricted, he threw his full weight behind those activities.

In spite of all that, Hisham bin Abdul-Malik remained fearful of Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) and his father Imam al-Baqir and the sympathy they received from the Alawites. He called them to Syria and cross-examined them. Finding no evidence to harm them, he was forced to let them return to the city of Madinah unscathed.

2. Collapse of the Umayyad State (132 AH):

The second momentous event which took place during the Imamate of Ja'far bin Muhammad al-Sadiq (a.s.) was the fall of the Umayyads and the establishment of the Abbasid rule. The revolution against the Umayyads was raised under the slogan of supporting Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) and furthering their cause. But, the Abbasids were actually working to monopolize the

caliphate. First, they called for the leadership of Ibrahim bin Muhammad al-Abbasi. Before his assassination, he had called the people to give their pledge of allegiance to his brother, Abul-Abbas Abdullah bin Muhammad al-Abbasi. When Abu-Salamah al-Khallal heard of the assassination of Ibrahim and the emergence of Abul-Abbas as the new leader, he feared the turn of events and wrote a letter in two copies. The first copy he sent to Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) and the second to Abdullah bin al-Hassan,²² one of the well-known chiefs and leading men among the Alawites. In his letter to Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) he urged him to go to Kufah to receive the pledge of allegiance from the people. He also ordered the messenger to demand clear answer from Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.). If the answer was positive, he should seek no other man, because he was the Imam and the qualified man for leadership. Otherwise, he (the messenger) should go to Abdullah bin al-Hassan. The messenger took the letter and rushed to Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.). He explained his mission to him. Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) said nothing to him, but took the letter and burned it in front of the messenger. "Tell your master of what you have seen," said the Imam. Then he recited a line of poetry quoted from al-Kumayt bin Zaid al-Asadi:

"O you who builds a fire, its light benefits other than you! O you who gathers firewood, you would only till it with someone else's rope"²³

The messenger left him and went to see Abdullah bin al-Hassan. He gave the copy of the letter to him. Abdullah was greatly pleased by it. But he could not make up his mind. He was unable to make such a critical decision without the Imam (a.s.). He thought that the Imam (a.s.) would welcome and approve of the offer. Much to his disappointment, the Imam (a.s.) told him about the letter he had received and how he had set it on fire. He forbade Abdullah to accept the offer and warned him of grave consequences.

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) knew the turn of events and had no doubt about what would follow. His father al-Baqir (a.s.), had told him, depending on the traditions reports from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), all about it. It is reported that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) once said to the members of his family:

"We are a family for whom Allah preferred the hereafter over this life. Indeed the members of my family shall certainly be tribulated, made homeless and dismissed out of their homeland. That shall go on until some people come from the East raising black standards. They shall ask the right but shall be denied it. They shall fight helped by others, and shall be given what they seek. They shall not accept it until they give it (the leadership) over to a man from my family who shall fill the earth with justice after being filled with injustice. Whoever is lucky to live at that time, let him join them even if it is hard for him to do so, as hard as crawling over a snowy land."²⁴

Abdullah bin al-Hassan did not want to listen to Imam al-Sadiq's (a.s.) advice, "The people want my son, Muhammad, to be their leader as he is the Mahdi of this ummah," Abdullah protested, "By Allah," replied the Imam (a.s.), "he is not the Mahdi of this ummah. And if he draws his sword he will be surely killed." Abdullah, by this time, was furious, "By Allah," he said angrily "It is the envy that makes you deny this. "The Imam (a.s.)

confirmed his good will by saying, "By Allah. I am only offering you my advice..."²⁵ Imam al-Sadiq's words came true. Abul-Abbas al-Saffah was given the pledge of allegiance even before the messenger had returned to Abu-Salamah al-Khallal.

The Abbasids seized power and trampled on the promises they had given to Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) and the people. After alluring the people, by pretending to be loyal to Ahlul-Bait (a.s.), fighting to restore their right to the caliphate, they showed their true colours. The Alawites, as well as other people, suffered terribly at the hands of the Abbasids. The first Abbasid caliph, Abul-Abbas, earned the nickname "al-Saffah" (bloodshedder) because of the countless number of people he had put to the sword. Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) bore the burnt of Abbasid's brutalities.

As a precautionary measure Abul-Abbas al-Saffah sent for Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) and forced him to live in al-Hirah under his watchful eye. That was only for a short time. The Imam (a.s.) returned to Madinah and resumed his educational activities.

After the ascension to power of Abu-Ja'far al-Mansoor, his fears of the Imam (a.s.) deepened, his envy intensified due to the fact that the Imam (a.s.) was held in high esteem by the people. Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) was known everywhere across the Islamic homeland, and his name, as a religious and political leader, eclipsed all the known intellectuals and politicians of the time. Such considerations made Abu-Ja'far al-Mansoor call Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) several times to Iraq to interrogate him, so as to know if the Imam (a.s.) was leading an anti-Abbasid underground organization. It was an undeniable fact that the ummah was rallying around the Imam. Imam's strong character and high qualifications were widely acknowledged. But, above all, al-Mansoor knew that the Alawites were working to put an end to the Abbasid hegemony, and restore the leadership of the ummah to Ahlul-Bait (a.s.).

Many times Abu-Ja'far al-Mansoor tried to woo Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) to his side but to no avail. The Imam (a.s.) actually boycotted the Abbasid rule, knowing that his attitude represented the right legal one that should be adopted by the people, and exposed the regime's deviation. As a result the image of the authorities gradually tarnished in the minds of the people, the "legitimacy" of the rule was stripped, and the way paved for its overthrow.

Abu-Ja'far al-Mansoor wrote a letter to Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) asking his companionship. He wrote: "Why do you not visit us as others do?". In response, Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) wrote back: "We have nothing for which we may fear you, nor do you have anything to do with the hereafter for which we may seek your companionship. You have not acquired a new favour for which we should congratulate you, nor a tribulation has befallen you so that we should console you"

"Keep us company so as to offer us your advice," wrote al-Mansoor insisting. "The one who seeks this life would not counsel you," replied al-Sadiq (a.s.)." And the one who desires the hereafter would not associate with you."²⁶

Abu-Ja'far al-Mansoor was boiling with anger, envying Imam's social position and uprightness. Al-Mansoor was even helplessly hesitant as what

attitude he should have. He once said,” ‘This is the sorrow that sticks in the throats of the caliphs. He cannot be exiled, and it is haram to kill him. If I and him were not of the same tree, whose roots were good, branches high, fruits delicious, and whose offspring were blessed and hallowed in the divine books, I would have dealt with him cruelly, for his harsh criticism, and his bad judgements of us.’”²⁷

3. Uprising of Muhammad bin Abdullah bin al-Hassan (al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah) (145 A.H.):

The third important event which took place during the Imamate of Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) was the uprising of Muhammad Dhil-Nafs al-Zakiyyah against Abu-Ja’far al-Mansoor, who assumed power in 136 A.H. succeeding his brother, Abul-Abbas al-Saffah. He was more hostile to and spiteful of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.).

Muslims, in general, suffered from his repression, a fact which urged Muhammad bin Abdullah bin al-Hassan, a cousin of Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) to revolt against al-Mansoor. We have explained Imam’s attitude toward the attempt of Abdullah bin al-Hassan and his son to assume the caliphate. Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) was sure that any of the Alawite attempts to seize power would fail. Thirteen years earlier, he met Abdullah bin al-Hassan and told him that the Abbasids would seize power, and his son, Muhammad, would be killed by al-Mansoor.

“This one (Abu-Ja’far al-Mansoor).” the Ímam (a.s.) said to him,” will murder him on the oily stones. Then he will kill his brother after him at al-Tufoof while his horse is wading through the water.

The Imam angrily rose to his feet. dragging his clock. Abu-Ja’far al-Mansoor who was present, followed him and asked: .’Do you know what have you said, O Abu-Abdullah?’ “Certainly, I know, it.” “By Allah. This shall certainly be”²⁸

“When Abu-.Ja’far al-Mansoor assumed the caliphate he nicknamed Ja’far al-Sadiq” (The Truthful). Whenever he mentioned him afterwards, he would say: ‘Al-Sadiq Ja’far bin Muhammad said to me such and such.’ He became to be known by this name.”²⁹

When Muhammad Dhul-Nafs al-Zakiy Tyah revolted against the injustices and oppression of Abu-Ja’far al-Mansoor, Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) had the same feeling and the very desire for change which Muhammad bin Abdullah bin al-Hassan had. But there was a difference. Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) clearly saw the future. He knew full the failure to overthrow the regime, while his cousin, Muhammad, was ignorant of it. Because of the failure of the attempt and the grave consequences it would entail regarding Ahlul-Bait, the Imam disapproved of the revolt.

Muhammad Dhul-Nafs al-Zakiyyah called the people to support him in his bid to seize power. For some time he went into hiding. No sooner were his father, his family and the sons of his uncle arrested, then he revolted in the city of Madinah. The uprising failed and Muhammad was killed. Later, his son, Ali, was murdered in Egypt. So was his son Abdullah in al-Sind. His son al-Hassan was arrested in Yemen and thrown into prison where he died. Poisoned, Idris, his brother, died in Morocco. Yahya, another brother

declared war on the regime in Basrah. Heading a small army of his followers, he moved toward Kufah, but was slain before entering it. And thus ended the Alawite revolution, which brought so much woes and disasters on Ahlul-Bait (a.s.). Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) was not spared. Al-Mansoor, the Abbasid caliph, who was haunted by fear and doubts about Imam's activities, thinking him to be the driving force behind every hostile anti-Abbasid act, sent for Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.), when the movement of Muhammad Dhul-Nafs al-Zakiyyah gained ground. He accused the Imam (a.s.) of supporting Dhul-Nafs al-Zakiyyah. Al-Mansoor harassed the Imam (a.s.), and put him on trial. After hearing the answers of Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) al-Mansoor became sure that the reports and complaints about Imam's alleged hostile activities were false. He eventually released him. Once more, after Muhammad Dhul-Nafs al-Zakiyyah's death, al-Mansoor sent for him. He accused him of collecting money and weapons, and gathering followers in preparation for a revolt. Al-Mansoor brought the spy who had made up these false reports about Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) so as to repeat his allegations in the Imam's face. When the man came, Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) asked him to swear that what he had told al-Mansoor about him was true. "By Allah." said the man," besides whom there is no god but Him, the All- Powerful, the Living and the Eternal one..."

"Do not hasten in your oath, I adjure you.."

Interrupted the Imam (a.s.), "What wrong do you see in this oath?", al-Mansoor asked Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.): "Allah is so merciful and bountiful, that when a servant of Him praises Him, He does not hasten him with punishment," replied the Imam (a.s.), "but, O man, say, I renounce Allah's power and authority and resort to my own power and authority and what I have said is true..."

"Take the oath which Abu-Abdullah has just asked you to take," al-Mansoor ordered the man. No sooner did the man swear the oath than he dropped dead. Al-Mansoor, witnessing all that, trembled and fear gripped him.

"O Abu-Abdullah." he said to Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.), "you can take your departure from me and go to the sanctuary of your grandfather, if you choose so. But if you like to stay with us, we will not hesitate to be generous and kind to you. By Allah, I will never believe anything said about you by anybody henceforth."³⁰

In such an atmosphere filled with animosity, terror, spying and persecution, the Imam (a.s.) lived. But, turbulent, though the political scene was, he succeeded in carrying out his great task of spreading knowledge and teaching, and graduating a whole generation of scholars, jurisprudents, and preachers.

IMAM SADIQ'S SCIENTIFIC ROLE

1. Scientific and Cultural Climate in Imam's Era:

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) lived at a time when there was a real and deep interaction between Islamic thought and knowledge, and those of the other nations and peoples. Translation from other languages grew.

Sciences, philosophies and thought of other nations were translated from foreign languages into Arabic. Muslims studied these sciences, added to them, enriched them, and broadened their scopes. As a result, an active, ideological and scientific movement emerged. Muslims indulged in the sciences of medicine, astronomy, chemistry, physics, arithmetics, among other ones. Philosophy, logic, fundamentals of reasoning, and other sciences were translated especially from Greek and Persian. Muslims were thus introduced to a new line of philosophical thought. This intrusion and cultural interaction did not pass without drawing reactions from the Muslims. And so a current of suspicion and unbelief rose in the Muslim community. Groups of people who adopted dialectics, and embraced deviant views took root.

But, after a long and bitter struggle, and long drawn out ideological fighting, Muslim's solid domestic front succeeded in stopping the cultural invasion, and exposing its falsehood and weaknesses. In addition to this scientific and cultural growth, during Imam's time, there was a remarkable progress in many fields. New political, economic and social events and problems surfaced which needed to be settled according to Islamic law. The ultimate result was the emergence of new, unheard-of views and schools of thought. Scholars (ulama) were more busy trying to deduce the right answers for the new problems.

2. Imam's Scientific Role:

Amidst these hard conditions, and the scientific and cultural activities, after the emergence of many schools of thought, Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) lived and carried out his responsibilities, as a scholar, and unmatched teacher in the cultural and religious domains. Hard, though the rulers and their hired writers tried to obliterate the image of this great man, he remained a shining star in the sky of Islam, and a rich spring of Islamic knowledge.

During his father's lifetime, he helped in the establishment of Ahlul-Bait's university at the Mosque of the Prophet (s.a.w.). They both spread knowledge throughout the Islamic homeland among the circles of fuqaha, exegesits of the Qur'an, and scholars of traditions. Scholars (ulama) and knowledge-seekers from far-flung areas were calling on them, benefitting from their knowledge. No other Muslim Imam was so much visited and asked about the different sciences of Islam, especially Qur'anic exegesis, traditions, beliefs, ethics, etc..., as were Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) and his son, al-Sadiq (a.s.). So it comes as no surprise that Ulamas', fuqaha, preachers, philosophers and other scholars highly praised Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) and his scientific edifice.

Our booklet does not allow us to cite all that was said about the Imam (a.s.). But that won't prevent us from quoting some testimonies.

Shaikh al-Mufid, may Allah bless his soul, says:

“From among all his brothers, al-Sadiq Ja’far bin Muhammad bin Ali bin Hussein (a.s.) emerged as the successor to his father Muhammad bin Ali (a.s.), as his trustee and as the next Imam after him.

He was distinguished among his people by his virtues. He was the cleverest, the greatest in his stature, and the most venerated among the scholars and the common people. People took from him so much knowledge that men conveyed it to remote areas. He was known in all parts of the Islamic homeland. No other member of Ahlul-Bait rivalled him as being the source of so much knowledge. No other member of Ahlul-Bait was also remembered and praised by the historians and biographers as he was. Nor did the historians have ever quantitatively reported from anyone as they had done from Abu-Abdullah (a.s.). Scholars concerned with the Prophetic traditions made a list of the authoritative narrators from different schools of thought, who reported from him. They amounted to four thousand men.”³¹

The great scholar, Allamah Al-Sayyid Muhsin al-Amin writes:

“Al-Hafidh bin Aqd al-Zaidi listed, in his biographical book, the names of four thousand worthy men, among others, who quoted from Ja’far bin Muhammad, and made a mention of his books...”³²

He wrote also that: “Al-Najashi said in his biographical book, on the authority of al-Hassan bin Ali al-Washsha: ‘I was lucky enough to meet in this mosque (the Mosque of Kufah) nine hundred old men, each one of them repeating: ‘Ja’far bin Muhammad told me’. He (the Imam) (a.s.) would say:

“I heard the traditions I communicate to you from my father. My father heard them from my grandfather. My grandfather heard them from his father, his father heard them from Ali Ibn Abi-Talib. Ali bin Abi-Talib heard them from the Apostle of Allah. And what traditions the Apostle of Allah had conveyed are the exact words of Allah, the Almighty and Most High.”³³

In his book *Manaqib Aal Abi-Talib* (Virtues of the Family of Abi-Talib), Ibn Shahrashoob quotes Abu-Na’im as writing in his book *Al-Hilyah* “The Ornament” the following, “Umar bin al-Muqdam said: Whenever I looked at Ja’far bin Muhammad, I would know that he was a descendant of the line of the prophets. Hardly did a book on Prophetic traditions, wisdom, asceticism, morals, shun his words. They said: ‘Ja’far bin Muhammad al-Sadiq said, ‘or,’ Ja’far al-Sadiq said.’ Al-Naqqash, al-Tha’labi, al-Qishri and al-Qizwini mentioned him in their Qur’anic exegeses.”³⁴

He further adds: “Abu-Na’im in his book *Hilyat al-Awliya*, lists the following scholars and prominent religious figures, who quoted Ja’far al-Sadiq; Malik bin Anas, Shu’bah bin al-Hajjaj, Sufyan al-Thawri, Ibn Jarir, Abdullah bin Umar, Rawh bin Al-Qasim, Sufyan bin Uyaynah, Sulaiman bin Bilal, Isma’il bin Ja’far, Hatam bin Isma’il, Abdul-Aziz bin al-Mukhtar, Wahab bin Khalid, Ibrahim bin Tahhan, and others,’ Abu-Na’im goes on to say; and Muslim quotes him in his authoritative book of traditions to support his arguments. Others say: among those who quoted from him were Malik, al-Shafi’i, al-Hassan bin Salih, Abu-Ayyub al-Sajistani, Amru bin Dinar, and Ahmad bin Hanbal. Malik bin Anas said, ‘Never had the eye

seen, nor the ear heard, nor the heart of a human being thought anyone more virtuous, knowledgeable, devout, or pious than Ja'far al-Sadiq."³⁵

Al-Ya'qoobi, the famous historian, describes him in these words, "He was the best of men, and the most knowledgeable about the faith. The learned men who learned from him would say, when quoting him' 'The scholar told us...,"³⁶

Muhammad Farid Wajdi, the compiler of Da'irat Ma'arif al-Qarn al-Ishrin (The Twentieth century Encyclopedia) writes about Ja'far bin Muhammad al-Sadiq (a.s.), the Imam of Muslims, and says:

"Abu-Abdullah Ja'far bin Muhammad al-Sadiq bin Muhammad.³⁷ bin Ali bin Abi-Talib is one al-Baqir bin Zain al-Abidin bin Hussein of the twelve Imams of the school of thought of the Imami Shi'ites. He was one of the leading men of the household of the Prophet (s.a.w.). His words were always true hence the nickname al-Sadiq. He was one of the most virtuous among people. About chemistry he wrote and expressed views."³⁸

He adds, "...His disciple, Abu-Musa Jabir bin Hayyan al-Sufi al-Tarsoosi, compiled a book with a thousand pages containing the letters of Ja'far al-Sadiq which were five hundred letters."³⁹

In his book Al-Milal wa al-Nihal (Religions and creeds) Abul-Fath al-Shahristani writes about Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) the following: "He was a man of immense knowledge in religion, complete competence in wisdom, extreme asceticism in life, and thorough piety preventing him against committing sins. He settled in Madinah, benefitting the Shi'ites who followed him, and conferring on the loyalists the secrets of sciences.

Then he went to Iraq and stayed there for some time, during which he never challenged the Imamate (the ruling authorities), nor did he fight anyone over the caliphate. He who is drowned in the sea of knowledge, never covets a seashore, nor does the one who attains the pinnacle of truth fears falling .."⁴⁰

Al-Amin al-Amili quoted al-Hassan bin Ziyad as saying, "I heard Abu-Hanifah, being asked about the most authoritative faqih he had ever seen, saying: Ja'far bin Muhammad."

Abu-Layla is reported to have said: "I would never retract something I have said, or cancel a judgement I have made on the advice of anyone except one man; Ja'far bin Muhammad."⁴¹

Malik bin Anas, the founder of the Maliki (an Islamic school of thought) phrases his view of Ja'far bin Muhammad al-Sadiq, in these words: "I occasionally met Ja'far bin Muhammad. He was smiling, with a sense of humour. When the Prophet was mentioned, his face would turn pale. For some time, I visited him regularly, I would see him doing one of these three things: praying, fasting, or reciting the Qur'an.

He would make his ablution before citing the Prophet's traditions. He never talked about anything that did not concern him..."⁴²

The leader of Khaorasan says about Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq in these lines of verse:

"You, Ja'far, are above the words of praise, which are tiresome. The honest men are but earth having you as its sky.

The one who is begotten by prophets is really beyond the power of words to praise.”⁴³

In his introduction to his book Imam al-Sadiq, the Shaikh of al-Azhar, Muhammad Abu-Zahrah, writes:

“With the help and blessings of Allah, we had decided to write about Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq. We have already written about seven of the honourable Imams. We have not delayed writing about him because he is less meritorious than them. On the contrary, he matches the seven Imam in their virtues. He is distinguished from the great men by his outstanding merits. Abu-Hanifah quoted him. He believed he was the most knowledgeable man among people, though diverse their opinions were. He considered him the most well-versed faqih. Malik used to call on him as a student and a narrator of traditions. He was the teacher of Abu-Hanifah and Malik, and if only that was to his credit, it would be enough for him. Nor there would be a man who could exceed him in virtues. And above all that, he was the grandson of Zain al-Abidin, who was the master of the city of Madinah in his time, due to his virtues, honour, faith and knowledge. Among his student were Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri and others from the later generations of Muslims. He is the son of Muhammad al-Baqir who slashed the knowledge open and got its pulp. He was the one to whom Allah, the Exalted, gathered the personal honour and the additional honour, to the noble lineage, and closeness to the Hashimites and the household of Muhammad (s.a.w.).”⁴⁴

That is what the space allows us to say about the Muslim’s, Imam, the master of the fuqaha and speakers, and the scion of prophethood, Ja’far bin Muhammad al-Sadiq (a.s.)

3- Imam Sadiq’s School:

As we have said, Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) and his father al-Baqir (a.s.) devoted their attention and power to the establishment of Ahlul-Bait’s school at the Mosque of the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.) in Madinah. Then, the Imam (a.s.) continued carrying out the task of developing this school, and defending monotheism after the death of his father. A whole generation of fuqaha, speakers, preachers, philosophers, scholars, etc., graduated from that school. They were mentioned in biographical books, and their contributions to the different fields of Islamic sciences are undeniable. It is by the guidance of Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (a.s.) and that of his noble forefathers and sons that Muslims found the right path which led them to the pure Shari’ah.

We should draw the attention of the dear reader to the fact that Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) was not a man who passed personal judgements. He was a man who took up the message from his father and entrusted it to his son. He inherited from his predecessors their knowledge and thought, from which and according to which, he preached to Muslims. Thus his school and methods of action were sequel to the works of his predecessors and the sunnah of the Prophet (s.a.w.) He made plain the Qur’anic teaching, and dug up the Qur’an’s treasures.

Many Islamic groups, based on fiqh and ideology, were formed in his days- Imam’s position towards them was one of guidance, exchange of

views, and constructive, responsible criticism. The Imam (a.s.) had the following objectives in mind:

First: Defending Islamic Beliefs:

When atheistic, philosophical and ideological currents surfaced, and at a time when vague doctrines, inconsistent with monotheism, emerged as an immediate result of the works of the straying philosophical schools such as “hyperbolic”, the Imam (a.s.) acted in defence of pure Islamic beliefs. He centered his efforts on explaining Islam’s beliefs and pointing out the straying views and beliefs in their light. For this purpose, he taught his students, like Hisham bin al-Hakam, the science of Islamic beliefs, reasoned argument, and philosophy, with special care. And so his students played a great role in defending monotheism in the face of deviant beliefs, such as those of fatalism and free will, incarnation and hyperbole.

By reading attentively Imam’s dialogues, arguments, and the contents of his sessions with the holders of the new, non-Islamic views, one can find this truth as plain as daylight. One can also grasp the true meaning of monotheism and its originality, The Imam (a.s.) tirelessly fought both the atheists like al-Disani and Ibn Abi al-Awja, and the hyperbolists, who pretended to be the defenders of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.), but conferred on them divine and godly qualities.

The Imam (a.s.) renounced those who renounced monotheism, exactly as his forefathers had done. Historians wrote about these non-Islamic beliefs, and the attitude of Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) towards them.

Sadeer is reported to have said: “I said to Abu-Abdullah (a.s.) that a group of people claim that you are deities, citing this noble verse: **“And He it is Who is God in the heavens and the earth;...”**⁴⁵ Holy Qur’an (43:83) ‘O Sadeer; replied the Imam (a.s.): “My hearing, sight, skin, flesh, blood and hair are disowning these people. Allah also is free from obligation to them. They do not follow the faith of mine and my forefathers. Allah shall certainly be furious with them when He brings us together on the Day of Judgement.”⁴⁶

It is worth mentioning here that many of such groups tried to exploit the name of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.), and cover their non-Islamic beliefs. But by the grace of Allah, the majority of these groups ceased to exist. At the present time, the standard of Ahlul-Bait is still hoisted by their followers, who walk in their footsteps, and embrace monotheism, the original pure one, as was preached first by the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.).

These followers have their school of thought which is widely espoused by Muslims in Iran, Iraq, Azarbayjan, Turkey, Lebanon, Arabian peninsula, Pakistan, Indonesia, Afghanistan, India, America, Canada, Australia, among other countries of the Islamic world. It is called Ja’far School of Thought, being attributed to Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (a.s.). They follow him and the other Imams of the Prophet’s household (a.s.). They are called the twelve-Imam Shi’ites as the Imams of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) are twelve.

The followers of Ahlul-Bait’s school of thought, the Ja’fari school, completely adhere to this original Islamic line. They are distinguished by their refusal of some of the bases on which the fuqaha of the other four schools of thought, in deducing the religious opinions or decrees, depend

such as syllogism, appreciation, accepting a certain action on the ground of being useful. These bases are not agreed upon by the Islamic schools of thought.

They consider the Qur'an and the sunnah of the Prophet (s.a.w.) the two key sources of Islamic legislation. In deducing Islamic decrees they give the reason and consensus among the fuqaha a secondary role, which makes the deduced decrees within the framework of the Book and the sunnah.

The Ja'fari School of thought believes in keeping the door of decree-deduction wide open. Ja'fari scholars, philosophers and fuqaha contributed widely to Islamic thought and Shari'ah sciences. The great Islamic historian, Agha Buzurg al-Tahrani (d. 1389 A.H) compiled a book in 25 volumes, and 11,573 pages, of large size, containing only the names of the books authored and compiled by Ja'fari Shi'ites in the different fields of Islamic thought and sciences, The book is called Al-Thari'ah ila Tasanif al-Shi'ah (The Means to the Books of Shi'ites).

Najaf, the famous Sacred Iraqi town, is ranked as one of the greatest and oldest seats of Islamic knowledge. To this town, the great scholar Abu-Ja'far Muhammad bin al-Hassan al-Toosi (d.460 A.H.) went, nearly a thousand years ago, and founded the theologian school which is still disseminating Islamic knowledge and graduating fully fledged fuqaha, philosophers and great religious leaders. In addition to this, there are other schools in the cities of Qum, Mashhad, both in Iran, and Karbala, in Iraq and many schools in other parts of the Islamic world.

Secondly: Spreading Islam:

The second major objective of the school of Imam Ja'far bin Muhammad al-Sadiq (a.s.) was to spread Islam, broaden the circle of fiqh and Shari'ah, strengthen their pillars and preserve their originality. No one matched Imam Ja'far bin Muhammad al-Sadiq (a.s) in the volume of traditions, fiqh and Islamic teachings.

And so his traditions, religious decrees and teaching were regarded as a basis for deducing fiqh and religious decrees on the part of the scholars, and jurists. Those who follow in his footsteps adhere to his school, and belong to his school of thought.

If it is of great use to mention here that the traditions, narratives and statements conveyed by Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) and the other Imams of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) from the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.), as well as the Qur'anic exegesis, religious decrees, explanations of the Qur'anic meaning and the sunnah of the Prophet (s.a.w.) handed down from the Imams of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.), were gathered and compiled in four, key books:

1. Al-Kafi: compiled by Abu-Ja'far Muhammad bin Ya'qoob bin Ishaq al-Kulaini al-Razi (d. 328 or 329 A.H.). The book contains 16,199 traditions.

2. Al-Tahthib (Refinement): Compiled by Abu-Ja'far Muhammad bin al-Hassan al-Toosi (d. 460 A.H).

3. Al-Istibsar (Enlightenment): Also by Shaikh al-Toosi.

4. Man la Yahdharhu al-Faqih (He who has no Access to a Faqih): Compiled by Shaikh al-Saduq (d.381 A.H). The ulama and fuqaha of the Ja'fari School of thought announced that not all the traditions and narratives

gathered in these books are dependable and authoritative unconditionally. They subject all this material to close study and examination dropping thousands of them, according to their method of studying and substantiation.

GLIMPSES OF HIS KNOWLEDGE

Neither this booklet, nor other like books could encompass the knowledge and thought of Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.). But we can, at least, quote him in the fields of monotheism, ethics, worship, sociology, politics, etc.

We categorize them in the following groups:

1. Knowledge:

Abu-Abdullah Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.) quotes the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.) as saying:

“Knowledge-seeking is an obligation on every Muslim. Allah certainly likes knowledge-seekers.”⁴⁷

“Prophet is Allah’s proof on His servants. And the proof between the servants and Allah is the reason.”⁴⁸

“He who learns, acts in accordance to what he learns, and teaches for the sake of Allah, is ranked in the Kingdom of Allah as ‘a great man’. It shall be said, ‘He learned for the sake of Allah, acted for the sake of Allah and taught for the sake of Allah.’”

2. Authenticity of Traditions:

He (a.s.) is reported to have said:

“Everything should be collated with the Book of Allah and the sunnah. Any tradition that does not agree with the Book of Allah is certainly an embellished lie.”⁴⁹

He (a.s.) quotes the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) as saying.

“Every truth has a sign indicating it, and every right has a mark identifying it. So whatever agrees with the Book of Allah take it, but leave out whatever disagrees with the Book of Allah.”⁵⁰

3. Monotheism:

“Abu-Abdullah is reported to have said that a man came to the Commander of the Faithful Ali bin Abu-Talib (a.s.), and asked: ‘O Commander of the Faithful, did you see your lord when you worshipped Him?’ ‘Woe to you’, replied the Commander of the Faithful, ‘I would never serve a lord I had not seen.’ ‘How had you seen Him?’ inquired the man. ‘Woe to you, ‘said the Imam (a.s.), ‘Eyes never see Him through the eyesight but hearts do see Him through the truths of the faith.’⁵¹

He is also quoted as saying:

“...be He Exalted above the descriptions of the describers who liken Allah to His creatures and attribute lies to Allah. You should know, may Allah have mercy on you, that the true version of monotheism is that revealed by the Qur’an about the attributes of Allah, the Exalted and Almighty. Deny falsehood and likeness to human beings from Allah. There is no falsehood, nor there is personification. He is Allah, the Immortal and the Eternal. Be He Exalted above the descriptions of the describers. Beware of transgressing the Qur’an, for if you do so, you shall certainly go astray after it had made all things plain to you.”⁵²

“Nothing on the earth or in the heaven exists without these seven qualities: will - the divine will -, divine decree, predestination...permission,

divine ordinance and duration. He who Claims to be able to revoke one of them is certainly an unbeliever.”⁵³

When asked about fatalism and free will, he (a.s.) said:

“There is no fatalism, neither there is free will. But there is a medium ground between them, in which right exists. It is only realized by a deeply learned man or the one who is taught by a deeply learned man.”⁵⁴

4. Guidance and Guidelines:

“He who judges fairly about what is related to him, is certainly approved of to judge about others’ affairs.”⁵⁵

“He who enjoins good and forbids evil should be possessed of three qualities: he should be aware of what he enjoins and what he forbids, just in what he enjoins and what he forbids, careful is what he enjoins and what he forbids.”⁵⁶

“Love of this life generates grief and sadness. Indifference to this life is certainly a source of comfort to the heart and body.”⁵⁷

“Jihad is the best thing after the Allah-ordained obligations.”⁵⁸

He (a.s.) quotes his grandfather, the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.), as saying.

“Fight and you will leave glory to your sons.”⁵⁹

He (a.s.) is quoted to have said:

“Enjoining good and forbidding evil are two divine attributes. Allah certainly helps those who keep them up, and Allah certainly fails those who abandon them.”⁶⁰

“Do not infuriate Allah through propitiating any one of His servants. Do not seek closeness to people by distancing yourself from Allah.”⁶¹

“Be kind and obedient to your fathers, so that your children will be kind and obedient to you. Turn your eyes away from others’ women, so that others will turn their eyes away from your women.”⁶²

“The faithful should have eight qualities: ‘Dauntlessness amid adversities, patience in tribulations, thankfulness in prosperity, content with the permission bestowed on him by Allah. He should never act unjustly towards his enemies, not should he annoy his friends. While his own body is weary, people are satisfied with him.’”⁶³

“The best worship is seeking knowledge for the sake of Allah and being humble to Him.”⁶⁴

“The dearest one of my brothers is the one who shows my flaws to me.”⁶⁵

“‘Good manners are part of the faith. They increase one’s sustenance.’”⁶⁶

He (a.s.) is reported to have said:

“The Apostle of Allah once sent a detachment on a certain duty:

‘Welcome,’ said he to them upon their arrival: ‘O people who have performed the minor jihad. But the major jihad awaits them’ ‘O Apostle of Allah’: ‘inquired they: ‘And what is the major jihad?’. ‘It is jihad against one’s own self.’”⁶⁷

Abu-Umar al-Shaibani said: “I saw Abu-Abdullah with a spade in his hand. Dressed in a heavy waist-wrapper, he was toiling at a wall of his, and sweat was coursing down his back. ‘May I be your ransom: ‘give me the spade to do the work for you; ‘I do love, ‘said he.’ that a man suffers under the sun heat earning his daily bread.,”⁶⁸

Sufyan al-Thawri said, “I called on al-Sadiq, may peace be upon him, and said to him, ‘Give me a piece of advice which I will act according to after you; ‘Do you observe it, Sufyan’ asked he. ‘Yes’, replied I, ‘O son of the daughter of the Apostle of Allah’. ‘Sufyan,’ said he ‘Liars have no nobleness. The envious enjoy no comfort. The tedious gain no friends. The deceitful have no true friends. The bad-tempered ones cannot win leadership’.

Then he fell silent, ‘Tell me more’, asked I; ‘O son of the daughter of the Apostle of Allah’. ‘Sufyan,’ said he; ‘To be sagacious, put your trust in Allah. To be rich, be content with what Allah appropriated for you. Should you associate with others the way they associate with you, you will gain in faith. Do not befriend the dissipated, lest you be effected with their debauchery. Consult with those who fear Allah in all your affairs.” He stopped, and I urged him, ‘Tell me more, o son of the daughter of the Apostle of Allah’, ‘Suifyan’; he went on, ‘He who seeks dignity without power, might without friends, and prestige without wealth, let him move from the humility of disobeying Allah to the honour of obeying Allah.’

Then he stopped, and I said, ‘Tell me more, o son of the daughter of the Messenger of Allah’, ‘Sufyan’, ‘continued he, ‘My father ordered me to adhere to three qualities, and advised me to keep away from three. As for those which he urged me to observe, he said to me, My son, whoever befriends an evil man, will not be spared his evil. Whoever does not restrict his words, will regret it. Whoever puts himself in suspicious positions will be accused of being dishonest.’ ‘What are the three qualities he forbade you to do’, ‘I asked him, ‘o son of the daughter of the Messenger of Allah?’. ‘He forbade me’, replied he, ‘to associate with the one who envies the wealthy, the one who rejoices at the adversity of others, and the one who slanders others.”

Then he (a.s.) added, ‘Six qualities can never be found in the believer: Toughness, bad temper, envy, stubbornness, telling lies and doing injustices to others,’⁶⁹

His Death:

After this blessed lifetime, filled with knowledge, activity, jihad, virtues, and piety, the grandson of the great Messenger Muhammad (s.a.w.), Imam Ja’far bin Muhammad al-Sadiq (a.s.), bid farewell to the world. He was a great man, learned and content. He was a defender of right and justice, a preacher of the right path, a doer of good, urging others to do it, a forbiddener of evil, warning others not to do it, patient and calm in all adversities and afflictions he faced. He enlightened for the ummah the path leading to the happiness of the two worlds, hoisted for the next generations the standard of struggle against the enemies of the faith, opposed every kind of deviation, innovation and low desire, demonstrated to the people, until the Judgement Day, that the school of Islam can create manliness and heroism, build the faith and good manners, lavish useful knowledge on its followers, and spread the sense of living and doing good among people. The Imam died in the lunar month of Shawwal, in the year 148 A.H., in the city of Madinah. He was buried at al-Baqi, graveyard beside his father, grandfather, grandmother Fatimah al-Zahra’ (a.s.), and his uncle, Imam Hassan (a.s.).

Peace be on his chaste soul, on the day he died, and on the day of his resurrection. Blessed be those guided by his guidance.
All praise be to Allah, the Lord of the world.

Endnotes:

- 1 She was also called Qaribah, and nicknamed Umm-Farwah.
- 2 It is also said that he was born in the month of Rajab, in the year 80 A.H.
- 3 Sirat al-A'immah al-Ithnay Ashar (Lives of the Twelve Imams), Hashim Ma'roof al-Hassani, vol. 2, p.198, 1st ed.
- 4 Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra (Great Classes of Men), vol. 5, p.324.
- 5 Mustadrask al-Sahihain (The Book that Collected the Traditions left out by the two Authentic Books of Traditions), al-Hakim, vol. 3, p.126. Usd al-Ghabah (Lions of the Jungle), vol. 4, p.22. Al-Jami'al. Saghir (The small collection - Book of Traditions), al-Suyooti, vol.1, p.93, the Yamani edition, or any other edition.
- 6 Dhakhair al-Uqbah fi Manaqib Dhawi al-Qurba (Treasures of the Hereafter about the Virtues of the Kinsfolk), Al-Hafidh Muhibul-Deen al-Tabari, p.78, 1967 ed
- 7 A'yah al-Shi'ah (chiefs of Shi'ites), Sayyid Muhsin al-Amin al-Amili, vol. 1, p.664, Last ed.
- 8 This text is wrong. It should be written: Hassan bin the Prophet (s.a.w.). Imam Hussein had no son with the name of Hassan.
- 9 Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh (The complete Accounts of History), Ibn al-Atheer, vol. 5, p.539, 1965 ed.
- 10 Tarikh ah-Ya'qoobi (History of al-Ya'qoobi), Ahmed bin Abi-Ya'qoob bin Ja'far bin Wahab, vol. 3, p.119, 1394 A.H
- 11 Al-Usool min al-Kafi (Key Questions of al-Kafi), vol. 2, p.334.
- 12 Ibid, p.333.
- 13 Murooj al-Dhahab (Tracts of gold), al-Mas'oodi, vol. 3, p.205.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Sirat al-A'immah al-Ithnay Ashar, Hashim Ma'roof al-Hassani, pp. 234-235.
- 16 Maqatil al-Talibiyyin (martyrdom of al-Talibiyyin), Abul-Faraj al-Isfahani, p.135.
- 17 Ibid, p. 135.
- 18 Ibid p.135
- 19 I'lam al-Wara bi A'lam al-Huda (Acquainting people with the leaders of Guidance), al-Tabari, p. 262, 3rd ed.
- 20 A'imat al-Madhahib al-Arba'ah (Leaders of the Four schools of Thought), Muhammad Isma'il Ibrahim, p.48, 1978 ed
- 21 Murooj al-Dhahab, al-Mas'oodi, vol. 3, p.206.
- 22 It is said also that he wrote a letter to Amru al-Ashraf an Alawite chief.
- 23 Murooj al-Dhahab, al-Mas'oodi, vol. 3, pp. 254- 255.
- 24 Sunan Ibn Majah (Ibn Majah's Book of Traditions), vol. 2., p.1366.
- 25 Murooj al-Thahab, al-Mas'oodi vol. 3, pp. 254-255.
- 26 Al-Imam al-Sadiq, Muhammad Abu-Zahra, p.139.
- 27 Ibid, p.138.
- 28 Maqatil al-Talibiyyin, al-Isfahani p.256.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Al-Imam al-Sadiq, Muhammad Abu-Zahrah, p.46.
- 31 Al-Irshad (Guidance), Shaikh al-Mufid, p.270.
- 32 A'yan al-Shi'ah, Sayyid Muhsin al-Amin, vol. 1, p.661, Latest ed.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Manaqib Aal Abi-Talib (Virtues of the Family of Abu-Talib), Ibn Sharashoob, vol. 3, p.372,1275, A.H.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Tarikh al-Ua'qoobi, Ahmad bin Abi-Ya'qool bin Ha'far bin Wahab, vol. 3, p.119, 1964 ed.
- 37 In the Encyclopedia the name of Zain al-Abideen is written as "Zaid al-Abidin bin Hassan." It should be corrected to "Zain al-Abidin bin Hussein. Hassan is the brother of Hussein and the paternal uncle of Zain al-Abideen (a.s.).
- 38 Da'irat Ma'arif al-Qarn al-Ishreen, Muhammad Farid Wajdi, vol. 3, p.109, 3rd ed.
- 39 Ibid.

- 40 Quoted from al-Muraja'at (correspondence between a Shi'ite and a Sunni Religious Scholar), Imam Sayyid Abdul-Hussein Sharaful-Deen, p.222.
- 41 A'yan al-Shi'ah, Sayyid Muhsin al-Amin, vol. 1, p.664, Latest ed. The same is quoted by Counsellor Abdul-Hamid al-Jundi in his book Al-Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, published by High council for Islamic Affairs in Egypt, p.161.
- 42 Al-Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, Counsellor Abdul-Hamid al-Jundi, p.159.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Al-Imam al-Sadiq, Muhammad Abu-Zahrah, p.3.
- 45 The Holy Qur'an, Surah of al-Zukhruf verse 84.
- 46 Usool al-Kafi, al-Kulaini, p.269, vol. 1, 3rd ed.
- 47 Ibid, pp. 30-35.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Ibid, p.69 and 98.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Ibid, p. 100.
- 53 Ibid, p.149.
- 54 Ibid, p. 159.
- 55 Tuhaf al-Uqool an Aal Bait al-Rasool Treasures of Minds Reported from Household of Prophet), al-Harrani, p.262, 5th ed.
- 56 Ibid, p.263
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 Usool al-Kafi, al-Kulaini, vol. 5, p.4.
- 59 Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, al-Hurr al-Amili, vol. 6, p.9.
- 60 Ibid, p.416.
- 61 Ibid, p.422.
- 62 Ibid, p.264. Mashkat al-Anwar (Niche of Lights), p.162.
- 63 Ibid, p.266 and 269.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, al-Harr al-Amini, vol. 6, p.270.
- 66 Ibid, p.275.
- 67 Ibid, vol. 5, p.12.
- 68 Ibid, p.76.
- 69 Tuhaf al-Uqool, al-Harrani p.278.