

IMAM AL-BAQIR (a.s)

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“...say: (Muhammad) : I demand not of you any recompense for it save the love of (my) relatives; and whosoever earns good. We increase for him good therein...”

(Holy Qur'an (42: 23)

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 First Who has no beginning and the Last, Who has no end. Peace and the blessings of Allah be on the Seal of His prophets and messengers, Muhammad, his pure family, loyal companions, and the faithful Muslims who follow him without seeing him till the Day of Judgement.

The House of Prophethood, where the message was communicated to the Prophet, the gathering place of the angels, the place of the divine revelation, the spot from which the Message shone, and the fountainhead of guidance ...Imagine what great men this glorious house could raise! What excellent capabilities could it nourish! What great leadership could it offered to mankind!

This sublime and lofty House shines with faith, gives the scent of wisdom, surges with Islamic thought, swells with glorious heroic acts, without which the true faithful would never have had a good example to follow in fighting the forces of the deviators from Islam (neo-Jahiliyyah), challenging the injustices of the rulers, foiling the schemes of global arrogance, and saving the down-trodden from tyrants both great and small.

Whoever antagonised this chaste, pure house renounced Islam. No ruler challenged it without being defeated.

This House was guaranteed as the source of purity by Allah.

The Seal of Prophets founded its pillars. From it the light of eternal Islam poured forth. It produced practical examples of human perfections; men who walked like other men, ate and drink exactly the way we do, but they set the most excellent of examples, one generation after another, and one era after another, of firm faith, faithfulness of jihad, steely determination, steadfastness to the divine message, love of martyrdom, and the laying down of their lives for the sake of Islam. Humanity never witnessed the like of them.

And so they won the high position of being the saints and pious men endeared to Allah, who were chosen to preach His Word.

The Foundation, in presenting to its dear readers a concise precis the life of a member of this house, the grandson of the Great Messenger of Allah (s.a. w.), Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.), hopes that the life of this Muslim leader, brimful with Islamic values and concepts, will be a beacon for Muslim standard-bearers, by whose light they can go on fighting the forces of deviation, striking hard all vicious attempts which aim at confusing the ranks of our ummah, disintegrating it and blocking its march towards enlightenment. We cherish the hope that they will march along to achieve the great objective of setting up an Islamic state throughout our great Muslim homeland...

And Allah is certainly the best Helper and Supporter...

Al-Balagh Foundation

Birth of Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (a.s.)

On the first day of the lunar month of Rajab, 57 A. H. the pure Prophetic house (a.s.) was swept with a tidal wave of joy and delight at the birth of Imam Muhammad bin Ali ibn Hussein (a.s.).

Unlike his predecessors from this great house, he was the first Imam who descended from Ali (a.s.)¹, through his father, Imam Ali al-Sajjad (a.s.), and his mother, Fatimah, daughter of Imam Hassan (a.s.) who was praised by Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) as being a faithful woman the like of whom was not found in the family of Imam Hassan (a.s.)². He was a Hashimite whose parents were Hashimites, and an Alawi whose parents were Alawis.

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) lived no more than three years under the care of Imam Hussein (a.s.), his grandfather. He witnessed, whilst a child, the tragedy of Taff during which Imam Hussein (a.s.), most of his family, and his followers were killed at Karbala. Throughout the years of his father's Imamate, he was imbued with the essence of the Message and the Imamate. During that period, he imbibed Islamic doctrine and the knowledge of the prophets (a.s.).

He was brought up in the fold of Islam. Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.), his father, educated him and prepared him in such a way that he would be able to shoulder the responsibility of the office of Imamate in accordance with the divine Will.

So Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) was the zenith, in his lineage, thought, and morals, which qualified him to be the ideological and social authority after his father.

The name and nickname of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) were given in advance by his great, great grandfather, the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.). The revered companion of the Prophet Jabir bin Abdullah al-Ansari, is reported to have said, "The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said to me, 'You may live long enough to see a son of mine from the loins of Hussein (a.s.), called Muhammad. He will certainly 'cut through' the sciences of religion. Should you see him, convey my greetings to him.'"³

That is why Imam Muhammad ibn Ali (a.s.) was called al-Baqir, which means 'the man who is deeply knowledgeable and sharply wise, who discovers knowledge's innermost mysteries and essence, and who is well-versed in its arts', as weighty Arabic dictionaries explain.

The unbiased reader will undoubtedly realize the greatness of the Imam (a.s.), and his high status in the world of Islam, through observing the special attention the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) lavished on him. He cherished him, chose his name and nickname, and sent his greetings to him through one of his great disciples, in spite of the time gap that separated the Prophet (s.a.w.) from his great grandson (a.s.).

Status of the Imam

The exalted position in thought and action of the Imam (a.s.), combined with the leadership qualifications he possessed as a direct outcome of the carefully planned education given him by Imam Ali al-Sajjad (a.s.), his father, made friend and foe alike agree that he was no ordinary person, but one who enjoyed a unique stature among the people. The following statements concerning the Imam (a.s.) were made by various prominent Muslim personalities belonging to different schools of thought:

1. Abdullah bin Ata' al-Makki is reported to have said, "Never have I seen scholars so limited in knowledge in the presence of a scholar other than Muhammad bin Ali al-Baqir."⁴

2. Muhyil-Deen bin Sharafah Al-Nawawi said, "...He is a venerable man of the second Muslim generation. He is a knowledgeable Imam unanimously agreed to be a man of dignity. He is adjudged as one of the religious affairs authorities (fuqaha') and Imams of the city of Madinah. From Jabir and Anas he communicated Prophetic traditions. Abu-Ishaq, Ata' bin Abi-Rabah, Amru bin Dinar al-A'raji (who was older than Al-Baqir), al-Zuhri, Rabi'ah and many more of the second generation and the great Imams of religious affairs (fiqh) reported Islamic Prophetic traditions from him. Both Al-Bukhari and Muslim reported from him..."⁵

3. Ibn al-Imad al-Hanbali said, "Abu-Jafar Muhammad al-Baqir was one of the fuqaha' of Madinah. He was given the title of al-Baqir because he ripped open knowledge, knew its fine subtleties and expanded it..."⁶

4. Muhammad bin Talhah al-Shafi' is reported to have said that, "Muhammad bin Ali al-Baqir was the one who cut through knowledge, collected and disseminated it. He raised it many degrees, outwitted others in exploiting it, imbibed it and decorated it with gems of thought. His heart was serene, his good deeds ever-growing, his soul chaste, and his morals noble. He would fill his time with deeds in obedience to Allah. His piety was unshakably firm. One could clearly see in him the signs of closeness to Allah, and the purity of the divine choice. Virtues hastened to him, and good qualities were honored by him."⁷

5. Imadul-Deen Abul Fida' Isma'il bin Umar bin Kuthayr testified that, "Abu-Jafar al-Baqir was a venerable man of the second Muslim generation who enjoyed great religious status. He was one of the foremost people of this ummah in knowledge, deeds, lordship and nobility. He was called al-Baqir 'for he ripped open knowledge and inferred judgment.' He was a religious man, a praiser of Allah, submissive and patient in worship. He descended from the family of the Prophet. Of what noble descent was! Spiritually lofty, he would weep profusely in fear of Allah. He shied from futile arguments and animosities."⁸

6. When reporting from him, Jabir bin Yazid al-Ju'fi would say, "The trustee of trustees, the inheritor of the knowledge of the prophets, Muhammad bin Ali bin Hussein (a.s.), told me..."⁹

Through the Imam (a.s.) reached the uppermost peak in his thought, morals and his closeness to the Muslim community (ummah), which made people from different schools of thought acknowledge his outstanding virtues and his high status, the revealed Islamic code of behavior (shari'ah)

did not leave the ummah on its own with regard to his Imamate. It officially introduced the Imam to the ummah, a practice adopted by the Shari'ah to identify any one who was assigned to such a great mission.

The statement identifying the Imam was usually delivered by a representative who was qualified to talk on behalf of the faith, such as the Prophet (s.a.w.), or an Imam the obeying of whom Allah made an obligation on the part of the ummah.

Al-Baqir was no exception. The Shari'ah didn't delay in announcing his Imamate. Following are some statements in this respect:

1. Jabir bin Abdullah al-Ansari asked the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.), "Who are the Imams from the progeny of Ali bin Abi-Talib, O Messenger of Allah?". "Hassan and Hussein the two lords of the youths of paradise," replied the Prophet. "Then, the master of those who were most patients of his time, Ali bin Hussein, then al-Baqir Muhammad bin Ali, whom you shall see, O Jabir. Should you see him, convey my greeting to him."¹⁰

2. Jabir bin Yazid al-Ju'fi said, "I heard Jabir bin Abdullah al-Ansari saying, 'When Allah, the Most Exalted, revealed to his Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) this verse: "O you who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority from among you..." 'I asked, O Apostle of Allah! We know Allah and His Messenger, but who are those in authority among us to whom Allah has linked obeying them like obeying Him?'. 'They are my successors,' said the Prophet (s.a.w.), 'and they are the Imams of the Muslims after me. The first of them is Ali bin Abi-Talib, then Hassan and Hussein, then Ali bin Hussein, then Muhammad bin Ali...'"¹¹

3. Imam al-Sadiq quoted his father (a.s.) as saying, 'I called on Jabir bin Abdullah and greeted him. He returned my greetings. This was after he had lost his eyesight.

"Who are you?" demanded he.

"Muhammad bin Ali bin Hussein," I told him.

"My little son", said he. "Come near me". I did that and he took my hand and kissed it. Then he said to me, "The Messenger of Allah sends his greetings to you."

"And peace and mercy and the blessings of Allah be upon the Messenger of Allah. How can that be, O Jabir?" asked I. "One day", said he, "I was with him. He said to me, Jabir, your life will be long enough to see a descendant of mine, called Muhammad bin Ali bin Hussein. Allah will endow him with enlightenment and wisdom. Convey my greetings to him."¹²

4. Uthman bin Khalid quoted his father as saying, "Ali bin Hussein bin Abi-Talib fell mortally ill. On his deathbed he gathered his sons Muhammad, Hassan, Abdullah, Umar, Zaid and Hussein. He delivered his last will to Muhammad bin Ali and called him al-Baqir, and ordered them to obey him in everything."¹³

5. Malik bin A'yun al-Juhani is reported to have said, "Saying his last will, Ali bin Hussein (a.s.) said the following words to Muhammad bin Ali (a.s.), his son; "My little son, I have made you my successor. Whoever claims Imamate other than you, Allah will punish on the Day of Judgement, by encircling his neck with a collar of fire. Praise Allah for that and thank

Him... His grace does not fade away if one thanks Him for it, but it certainly vanishes if one shows ingratitude for it. The person who thanks Allah for His Grace certainly feels happier so doing than his feeling towards the Grace itself.” “...If you be grateful I will increase (My favour) unto you, and if you be ungrateful, surely my torment is severe.” Holy Qur'an (14:7)¹⁴

6. On his deathbed, the last will of Imam Ali bin Abi-Talib (a.s.) to Imam Hassan (a.s.), was as follows: “...My little son! The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) certainly ordered me to make my will to you, and give you my books and weapons, as he made his will to me and gave me his books and weapons. He, furthermore, ordered me to order you that when death comes to you, you should hand them over to your brother Hussein.' Then he turned to his son Hussein (a.s.) and said, The Apostle of Allah had, likewise, ordered you to hand them over to your son Ali bin Hussein.' Then he turned to Ali bin Hussein (a.s.) and said, and the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.) ordered you to give them to your son Muhammad bin Ali. So convey the greeting of the Messenger of Allah and mine to him.”¹⁵

These are only a few texts¹⁶ which testify the fact that Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.), and no one else, assume the office of Imamate and the ideological and social authority after his father's death.

IMAM'S CHARACTER

We usually refer, in a definite way, to the fact that the Imams (a.s.) are of the same ideological fabric. Their daily conduct with people and their life-style were the same. But there were differences in practice that can be attributed to the diversity of the social problems, and the different psychological, ideological and political conditions prevailing in their times.

This phenomenon, the similarity between the characters of the Imams, is the exact result of the one ideological basis which defined their concepts, behaviour and activities. And that is a fact explicitly expressed by the Apostle of Allah (a.s.) when he said to his grandson, Hussein (a.s.): “Allah has certainly chosen nine Imams from your loins, O Hussein. All of them are equal in their outstanding merits and position in the sight of Allah.”¹⁷

And as we have done before, we shed light on some aspects of the character of the Imam (a.s.). We will cite some practical examples from the life of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) that we may ponder over it, in order to find our way on the road trodden by those great men who raised the standard of guidance high on earth.

Firstly- his Spirituality:

If Ahlul-Bait suffered from the different tribulations poured on them by deviant rulers, such trials were targeted at their faith first and foremost. They were physically exterminated because of the mission they carried. Their foes wanted to obliterate their thought, jurisprudence and all trace of them. Even their tombs were not spared, many attempts being made to raze them to the ground.

It is no exaggeration to say that what information we now possess about Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) is only scanty fragments that reflect a little of their glory.

They were persecuted. Their followers were also persecuted for hundreds of years after them. The cultural institutions dedicated to preserve their legacy, were dealt hard blows throughout both our past and present history.

As a result, the researcher will find difficulty in forming an opinion about any single Imam. The books that deal with their lives are scarce, but the scattered narratives and traditions that exist are a reliable basis for a vivid picture, though not complete, of their lives.

Following are some texts about his way of worship and his spiritual life which help us to realize the depth of the relationship between Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) and his Exalted Lord:

1. His son Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) is reported to have said, “My father used to praise Allah much. When I walked with him, he would remember Allah; when I ate with him, he would remember Allah. Even when talking to people, he would remember Allah. I heard him always praising Allah and saying repeatedly: 'There is no god but Allah'. He would gather us together and order us to praise Allah till sunrise. Whoever was able from among us, my father would order him to recite the Qur'an, but he would order the one who could not read to praise Allah.”¹⁸

2. Aflah, his manservant, said, “I went to perform hajj with Muhammad bin Ali. Upon entering the mosque, he looked at the House of Allah and started weeping aloud till all could hear him. 'May my father and mother be

your ransom,' I said to him, 'People are looking at you... if you lower your voice a little...' 'May Allah have mercy on you,' explained he. 'Why should I not cry? Maybe Allah favours me with His mercy, and I may win His pleasure on the Day of Judgement.' Then he circumambulated the House. Near the maqam (a stone bearing the footprints of the Prophet Abraham a.s.) he went down in prostration. When he raised his head, (I saw that) the place where he had touched his forehead to the ground was wet due to the profusion of his tears."

3. Concerning his supplication at night, Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) said, "My father would say, in his prayer, at night, "You ordered me to do good, but I did not heed. You forbade me to do evil, but I did not listen. Here I am, Your servant in Your presence. I ask your forgiveness."¹⁹

4. And in his supplication which he used to say when he went to bed, he said, "In the Name of Allah. My Lord, I have submitted myself to You, turned my face towards You, and to You I commended myself. I have put my trust in You out of my fear from You and my desire to win Your satisfaction. There is no escape, neither there is refuge in anyone except You. I believe in Your Book which You revealed, and in Your Messenger whom You sent..."

...Then he would recite the praise of al-Zahra.²⁰

These selected texts reveal a soul infused with the love of Allah, and the seeking of His nearness, feeling His hovering mercy everywhere and always, and praying to Allah with all his soul, heart and senses. Such a state of spirituality can be achieved hardly by anyone. Only the saints can feel the closeness of Allah in such an intimate way.

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir was so close to Allah, the Exalted, that the hereafter and the meeting of Allah were his only concern. He was totally obsessed with them. One day he reportedly said to Jabir bin Yazid al-Ju'fi, may Allah be pleased with him, "By Allah! O Jabir, I am sad and worried".

May I be your ransom, Jabir said. What is this sadness and worry for?

O Jabir, said the Imam (a.s.), "It is the sadness and worry of the hereafter. O Jabir, whoever's heart the essence of true faith enters into, will be busy away from this life and its ornamentation. The ornamentation of this life is only a sport and a pastime. The life to come (the hereafter) is the true life. The faithful should never rely on this earthly life. Rest assured that the seekers of this life are unaware, conceited and ignorant. But the seekers of the hereafter are active, ascetic, well-versed in knowledge and jurisprudence, deep in thought over their life. They never tire of praising Allah.

Rest assured, Jabir, that the pious people are rich. A little from this world satisfies them. Their burden is light. If you forget to do good they will remind you of it, and if you do good they will help you in it. They overcame their pleasures and lusts, and pushed obedience to their Lord before them. They looked at the straight path and sought the love of the beloved of Allah. They loved, followed them, and walked in their footsteps..."²¹

Such high spirituality cannot be found in anyone except the prophets and their trustees. The Imam translated his relationship with Allah into guidelines for Jabir, his disciple, and those who would follow his example.

Secondly - Social Aspects of his Character:

Following are quotations which shed light on the Imam's daily life, his relationship with the people and the scope of his social activities.

1. His son Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) is quoted to have said, "One day, I called on my father and found him busy handing out eight thousand dinars to the poor people of Madinah. He set free a family of eleven slaves."²²

2. Al-Hassan bin Kuthayr said, "I once complained to Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Ali (a.s.) about my poverty and how my friends had abandoned me. 'How bad is the brother who cares for you when you are wealthy and abandons you when you are poor,' commented he. Then he beckoned to his servant who brought a bag in which there were seven hundred dirhams. 'Spend this', he said to me,' and when it runs out, notify me."²³

3. Amru bin Dunya and Abdullah bin 'Ubayd were reported to have said, "Whenever we met Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Ali (a.s.), he would give us money for our families, and money, presents and clothes for ourselves. He would say, "These were put aside for you before you met me."²⁴

4. Sulaiman bin Qarm said, "Abu-Ja'far Muhammad bin Ali (a.s.) would reward us with five hundred, six hundred and upto one thousand dirhams. He never tired of helping his brethren, those who came from distant places to see him, and those who hoped he would help them."²⁵

5. Salma, Imam al-Baqir's woman servant, said, "He used to receive his brothers at his house. He would not allow them to leave without feeding them the best food, clothing them in the best clothes, and giving them money. I would argue with him to cut down but he would reply, 'O Salma, what is the best deed of this life if it is not helping brothers and acquaintances?' He gave rewards of five hundred, six hundred and up to one thousand dirhams."

His brothers in Islam who called on him never felt bored in his presence. He loved to receive people and would say, "You can know the depth of the love your brother feels in his heart for you by examining the love you have for him in your own heart". Never was he heard saying, "Beggar, may Allah bless you!", or "Take this, O beggar!". He would say, "Call them by the best of their names".²⁶

One may not appreciate the Imam's generosity in the way it should be appreciated without knowing that the Imam (a.s.) was not well-off. He was as his son Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) described him, "My father had the least amount of money at his disposal compared with the rest of the members of his family, but his financial burden was the heaviest."²⁷

Though his financial resources were limited he shouldered his social responsibility adequately. He helped the people and alleviated their pains which were caused by the injustices done to them by the rulers at the time. The followers of Ahlul-Bait, as we know, bore the brunt of that discriminatory policy.

How great is the slogan which he raised, quoting his great, great grandfather, the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.), "Three acts are the hardest: Consoling one's brothers with one's money, being fair with people,

especially with matters related to one's interests, and praising Allah in both times of prosperity and adversity.”²⁸

He took pains to instruct his followers in the norms of good conduct. Following are some of his concepts in this respect:

*“Three of the noblest deeds of this life and the hereafter are: Forgiving one who has wronged you, keeping your relations with one who has cut them off; and showing tolerance towards one who has shown ignorance towards you”.*²⁹

*“Any servant of Allah who refrains from helping his Muslim brother and trying to meet his needs, whether they are met or not, will be afflicted with trying to secure things for which he will bring Allah's wrath upon himself instead of His rewards. And any servant of Allah who avoids spending money on things which earn him the pleasure of Allah, will be afflicted with giving out money manifolds on what brings the wrath of Allah on himself.”*³⁰

Once a Christian reviled him brazenly, and called him “a cow”!³¹

“I am Baqir”, said the Imam.

“You are the son of the cook”, said the man.

“Yes, that is her profession”, replied the Imam.

“You are the son of the black woman, the Negress, and the foul-mouthed”, persisted the Christian.

“If you have said the truth, may Allah forgive her, but if you have lied, may Allah forgive you”, said the Imam.

At that point, the Christian realized the greatness of the man he was insulting. He immediately regretted what he had said and embraced Islam in the presence of the Imam.³²

Thirdly - his Thoughts:

Due to their special education and upbringing, all the Imams achieved the highest levels in all fields. In thought and in practice, they were the true bearers of the Message to which they remained faithful.

Even though their thoughts were in fact inherited from the Prophet (s.a.w.), and his son-in-law Ali bin Abi-Talib (a.s.), the trustee of the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.), their success in settling the problems they faced and the people faced, and the wisdom they showed in dealing with the different events during their lives, reflect a reservoir of inexhaustible knowledge and skill.

A number of traditions refer to this fact. Practically, the Imams found no difficulty whatsoever in answering any question put to them. Nor were they ever confronted with a problem which remained unresolved, whether it was ideological, religious or scientific. Throughout their lives the Imams never erred in explaining a concept or an opinion.

As for Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.), his deep thought, and his superiority over other scholars at that time in the fields of jurisprudence, Qur'anic exegesis, traditions, and the other Islamic sciences, made his contemporaries hold him in high esteem and admiration.

Abdullah bin Umar bin al-Khattab was asked about something, but he failed to offer an answer. Instead he advised the questioner to visit Imam al-Baqir (a.s.), “Go to that youth and put your question to him, and tell me afterwards what is his answer”, said he. When the man asked the Imam

(a.s.) about it, he answered him directly and immediately. The man then returned to Abdullah with the answer. “That came from a household well-versed in knowledge”,³³ commented Abdullah.

Abdullah bin Ata' al-Makki is reported to have said, “Never have I seen scholars so limited in knowledge in the presence of a scholar other than in the presence of Abu-Ja'far Muhammad bin Ali bin Hussein (a.s.). For all the respect and veneration al-Hakam bin Utaybah commanded among the people, in the presence of Abu-Ja'far he was like a boy in the presence of his teacher”.³⁴

Following are some of his answers to questions he was asked. We hope they will help us to shape our minds and reform our communities.

1. Amru bin Ubayd, a leader and intellectual of al-Mu'tazilah³⁵ (literally schismatics), a school of thought, called on Muhammad bin Ali al-Baqir to test him with a question. “May I be your ransom”, said he, “What is meant by this verse: 'Or see not those who disbelieve that the heavens and the earth were one piece, before We clove them asunder,...' Holy Qur'an (21:30) 'What is this one piece and what is meant by clove them asunder!’

“The heavens were one solid mass which rendered no rain”, replied the Imam (a.s.). “And the earth was a solid mass which produced no plants. Allah tore asunder the heavens with the rain, and the earth with the plants”.

Amru kept silent and did not comment.

Once again he returned, asking this question, “May I be your ransom. Tell me what is meant by this verse: “...and those whom My wrath descends do perish indeed!” Holy Qur'an (20:81) What is that wrath1?”

The Imam answered, “O Amru, the wrath is when a creature gets angry when something provokes him, changing him from one condition to another, and whoever claims that wrath and satisfaction change Allah, and that He regains His equanimity, he is describing Allah with the qualities of that creature.”³⁶

2. Muhammad bin al-Munkadir, a renowned leading sufi, said, “I did not believe that the like of Ali bin Hussein could have a son who matched him in virtues till I saw his son Muhammad bin Ali. I wanted to admonish him but he advised me”.

“How did he advise you?” asked his followers.

“I went out to a suburb of Madinah when it was unbearably hot. I saw Muhammad bin Ali, who was well-built man, leaning on two of his retainers. It appeared he was unwell. “An old man from the elders of the tribe of Quraish was out seeking worldly gains at this hour and in such difficult circumstances!” “What if death came upon you while you are in this condition?’ He let go of his two retainers, managed to stand upright, and said, “Should death come to me in this state it will come to me, by Allah, while I am doing something pleasing to Allah, to spare myself begging from you and other people. I would only fear death if it came upon me while I was sinning against Allah”.

“May Allah have mercy on you”, I said to him. “I wanted to admonish you, but you have advised me”.³⁷

We grasp the importance of the words of the Imam (a.s.) when we realise that Ibn al-Munkadir was a sufi who believed in living in isolation,

depending on other people to support him for his living, as he claimed to devote himself entirely to worship. Islam rejects this: “Cursed be he who relies on other people for his living.”³⁸

Deeming it the best chance to refute sufism, the Imam (a.s.) alerted Ibn al-Munkadir to reality. Death at the time of earning one's bread, the Imam (a.s.) reminded him, is an act which pleases Allah. Al-Munkadir had no other course but to admit that fact. He translated his conviction into these words, “I wanted to admonish you, but you advised me”.

3. Abu-Yousif al-Ansari said, “I asked Abu-Hanifah, 'Have you ever seen Muhammad bin Ali al-Baqir (a.s.)?’

“Yes”, replied he. And I asked him one day, 'Does Allah ask for the sins of His servants?' and he asked, 'Do His servants disobey Him forcefully?' Abu-Hanifah said after a moment's pause, I have not found a more refuting reply than this one”.³⁹

It is necessary to remind the reader that Abu-Hanifah was the leader of one of the Islamic schools of thought. Abu-Hanifah had every right to describe the Imam's reply as “refuting”. He knew that the Imam (a.s.) had a decisively definite and clear-cut opinion on the conception of “Fatalism and free will” which had split Muslim intellectuals and scholars for a long time. The Imam (a.s.), to the admiration and astonishment of Abu-Hanifah, defined it in a few words.

4. Abu-Hamzah al-Thumali said, “Qutadah bin Du'amah al-Basri called on Abu-Ja'far (a.s.). 'Are you the faqih (jurisprudent) of the people of Basrah?' asked the Imam (a.s.). 'Yes', said the man.

“May Allah have mercy on you, Qutadah”, protested the Imam (a.s.), “Allah, the Exalted and Almighty created 'selected' people and made them signs for all His creatures.

They are pillars on His earth, who are in charge of His affairs. They are, as He knew in advance, pure and chaste.

He chose them from among His creatures before He created them. Like protectors they are on the right-hand of His throne”.

Qutadah was silent for a long time, then said, 'May Allah grant you success. By Allah, I have sat in the presence of fuqaha and before Ibn-Abbas. My heart has not fluttered before any one of them the way it does before you'.

'Do you know where you are?', queried the Imam (a.s.). “You are in the presence of houses which Allah has sanctioned to be built for the remembrance of His Name. In them, morning and evening, His praise is recited by men whom neither trade nor profit can divert from remembering Him, from offering prayers, or from giving the poor-rate”. So, this is your position, and that is ours'.

“You have said the truth, by Allah', agreed Qutadah. 'May I be your ransom. They are not houses built of stones or bricks'.”⁴⁰

5. Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) is reported to have said, “Beware of sloth and boredom, for they are the key to every evil Should you get lazy you will not do what you are obliged to do. And should you get bored you will not have the perseverance to do what you are obliged to do”.

And he said, “There is nothing more lovable to Allah than to be implored. Nothing other than supplication wards off fate. The greatest punishable evil act is injustice. Sufficient flaw is that one sees in other people what one is blind to see in oneself, enjoins them to do what one cannot bring oneself to do, and annoys one's visitor with what does not concern one”.⁴¹

6. Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) explains the meaning of Shi'ite in the following words, “Our Shi'ites are simply those who guard themselves against evil and obey Allah. They are known for their modesty, submission to Allah, giving back trusts to their owners, much remembering of Allah, fasting, praying, being kind to their parents, helping their poor neighbours, the destitute, debtors and orphans among them, truthful in speaking, reciting the Qur'an, and avoiding evil talk. They are those whom their people put their trust in”.⁴²

7. One of his most excellent advice was given to the famous Umayyad ruler, Umar bin Abdul-Aziz. It reads, “I recommend you to take the Muslim youths for sons, the middle-aged for brothers, and the old ones for fathers. So, have mercy on your son, help your brother, and be kind to your father. Should you do a favour, go on doing it”.⁴³

The Imam's reputation as a religious authority was so wide-spread that people from far-flung areas within the Muslim homeland, flocked to see him. Top intellectuals and leaders of the Islamic schools of thought came to see him. We have already quoted some of his arguments with a few of them, such as Ibn al-Munkadir the sufi leader; Amru bin Ubayd, a leader of the Mu'tazilah, Abu-Hanifah, a leader of an Islamic school of thought; Qutadah, the jurispudent and Qur'anic exegetist of Basrah, and others, whom we cannot quote due to shortage of space, but among them are the following: Al-Hassan al-Basri, Tawoos al-Yamani, Nafi' bin al-Azraq, and Abdullah bin Nafi'.

But the thought of Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) was by no means restricted to the arguments. It was broad, open, covering a wide range of subjects related to this life and the hereafter. He lead the school of thought of Ahlul-Bait immediately after the death of his father. He took wide strides in pushing it along towards perfection.

THE REFORM MARCH

In our previous booklet about Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.) the father of Imam al-Baqir (a.s.), we tackled the method which he adopted to lead the reform movement. During his blessed life-time, Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.) was clearly a pioneer who took upon himself the task of infusing the ummah with spiritual, ideological, and moral energies and values, not to mention strengthening their loyalty to Ahlul-Bait (a.s.).

His task did not stop at that point. He had laid the cornerstone of an eternal school of thought. We saw how the Imam (a.s.)⁴⁴ graduated a group of pioneers, who were, in fact, rare scholars and bearers of the Message, of a great calibre. That the odds were against him did not discourage him. No sooner did Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.) pass away than Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) took over, thanks to his perfect qualifications and the Divine Will. The Imam (a.s.) carried the torch of the Imamate which shone brilliantly, providing guidance throughout the last nineteen years of his blessed life-time.

What was the nature of the strategy of reform which he followed?

Before answering this question, let us emphasize once more, the fact that the Imam's reforms were taken in accordance with the prevailing conditions at the time: the ideological level of the ummah, the positive or negative relationship between the authorities and the people, the strength or weakness of the ruler, the relationship between the ruler and the Imam, the stability or instability of the situation at that time.

About two thirds of the term of the Imam's Imamate witnessed a cessation of the struggle with the devious authorities. It covered the period from the closing years of the rule of al-Walid bin Abdul-Malik till the early years of the rule of Hisham bin Abdul-Malik. The rulers who came before Hisham basked in luxury and pleasure, womanizing, and struggling with each other for power. But to give him his due, Umar bin Abdul-Aziz led a different, and honest life.

He adopted an open policy, and was known to be a just ruler of fair judgement.

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) benefitted from the political situation and worked hard to complete the great educational project initiated by his father. He provided the reform movement with more cadres through his unceasing educational efforts at the highest level. That is why so many people, of different educational backgrounds, used to visit him, coming from various parts of the Muslim world. Famous scholars from the groups of Mu'tazilah, Sufis, Kharijites (one-time followers of Imam Ali (a.s.) who later broke with him and fought him) and others, used to call on him, either to discuss with him certain religious matters or to benefit from his knowledge.

The school of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) was characterized by the diversity of its sciences.

1. School of Diverse Sciences:

“Hardly did a son of Hassan and Hussein (a.s.) shown such knowledge of the faith, sciences of Sunnah and the Qur'an, the life of the Prophet (s.a.w.) and arts of literature, as did Abu-Ja'far al-Baqir (a.s.)”⁴⁵ “Abu-Ja'far narrated

the histories of the prophets and wrote about the wars of the Prophet (s.a.w.). Through him, Muslims were acquainted with the practices of the Prophet (s.a.w.). On him they relied in performing the rites of hajj which he related from the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.). From him they took and wrote down the exegesis of the Qur'an. Both scholars and common people reported from him.

He argued with whoever disagreed with him from the heads of the various schools of thought. People learnt much, through him, of the basic tenets of Islam.⁴⁶

Describing his sublime horizons of knowledge, his disciple Muhammad bin Muslim says, "Nothing flashed into my mind which seemed hard to understand without my asking Abu-Ja'far (al-Baqir) (as.) about it. I put thirty thousand questions to him."⁴⁷

Jabir bin Yazid al-Ju'fi, a companion of Imam al-Baqir's son Imam al-Sadiq, says, "Abu-Ja'far al-Baqir communicated seventy thousand traditions to me."⁴⁸

Undoubtedly, there is underestimating the high status of Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) after hearing Abdullah bin Ata' al-Makki forcefully announcing, "Never have I seen scholars so limited in knowledge in the presence of a scholar other than Abu-Ja'far. I have even seen al-Hakam bin Uaynah look defeated before him."⁴⁹

The thought of Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) is derived from the Divine Message. It is comprehensive, covering all fields of knowledge including philosophy, jurisprudence, and Islamic history.⁵⁰

Not only were the contents of the Imam's thought broad and diverse, but also he sought different ways to communicate it to the ummah. He might hold an educational class, in which he lectured to his disciples or those seeking knowledge. Sometimes he would hold Islamic debates with individuals. Other times, when the chance offered itself, he would disseminate his thought in mass meetings such as the hajj at Mecca. His sayings, speeches, conversations and discourses conveyed his thought.

Elsewhere we have mentioned some arguments he had with leading scholars including Amru bin Ubayd, a leading figure of Mu'tazilah; Ibn al-Munkadir, the ascetic faqih who embraced sufism; Abu-Hanifah, a leader of an Islamic school of thought; Qutadah bin Du'amah the faqih of Basrah⁵¹ and renowned of the Qur'an. In the following arguments, the Imam tackled some philosophical matters in addition to questions on jurisprudence, Islamic beliefs, and Qur'anic exegesis and also, for the reader's benefit are quotations from the Imam's literature in other domains of knowledge:

1. Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) said to Jabir bin Yazid al-Ju'fi, may Allah be pleased with him:

"...Let me remind you to take note of five things: If you are wronged, do not do injustice to others. If you are betrayed, do not betray others. If you are given the lie, do not get angry. If you are praised, do not feel glad. If you are not praised, do not get sad. Ponder on what is said about you. Should your friend tell you that it is the truth, then beware that falling in the estimation of Allah, the High and Exalted, due to your fury at hearing the truth, is by far a graver affliction than the fear of falling in the estimation of

people. But if what is said to you is baseless, then without tiring your body you will win the divine reward...

Rest assured that you cannot be a loyal follower of us until you feel that you will not be saddened by those who say to you "You are an evil man.' Nor will you be delighted by those who say to you, 'You are a righteous man.' But examine yourself in the light of the Book of Allah. Were you treading its path, avoiding what it prohibits you to do, doing what it enjoins you to do, fearing its warnings? Then be steadfast in your faith and be delighted, for what has been said about you will not hurt you.

If you act contrary to Qur'anic teachings, how can yourself force you to do so? A faithful person is obliged to struggle with his self to prevent it from following its own desires. One time he opposes his low desires for the sake of Allah's love, and another time he falls down defeated by his low desires. Then Allah will lift him up, and raise him from his fall. He remembers his sins, and resorts to repentance and fear of Allah. As his fear of Allah grows, his insight and knowledge increases, and Allah says: "Surely those who guard (themselves against evil) when an evil thought from Satan afflicts them, become mindful, then lo! they see." Holy Qur'an (7:201)

O Jabir, for your own benefit, regard as much the little sustenance bestowed on you by Allah so that you will be able to thank Allah. And for your own benefit, regard as little your worship to Allah, however much it may be, so as to be able to subject yourself and win Allah's forgiveness. Should you entertain any doubts, ward them off by knowledge. Benefit from your knowledge in your acts which should be purely for the sake of Allah. In all your acts, by which you seek Allah's nearness, ward off deep unawareness by sharp attentiveness. Keep your sharp attentiveness by true fear of Allah. Avoid extravagance by being aware of the realities of life. Preserve yourself from the deviation of your desires through reason. Fight the overwhelming power of low desires with knowledge. Excel others in doing good and pure deeds for the Day of Reckoning. Achieve self-satisfaction by avoiding greed..."⁵²

In these lines you feel the inherited essence of prophethood through the printed words. The Prophet's presence is so obvious that you cannot but decide that the sayer was not an ordinary man. Rather, he possessed strong links with the pure springs of the original divine thought. He was the inheritor of his great great grandfather, the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.). He carried the message of the Prophet (s.a.w.) and preached it in his own time.

2. Following are some of his short maxims.⁵³

"No mixture of two things is better than that of forbearance and knowledge."

"To have perfection, there must be good comprehension of the teachings of religion, patience at the time of adversity, and frugality."

"Three of the best morals of this life and the hereafter are: Forgiving one who wrongs you, keeping your relations with one who terminates them, and showing forbearance towards one who shows ignorance towards you."

"A man will never be knowledgeable until after he has stopped envying those who are superior to him, and scorning those inferior to him."

“There are three bad habits to which no one adheres without falling victim to their evil: they are injustice, termination of one's relations with one's relatives, and perjury by which one confronts Allah.”

“The fastest reward- bringing act of obedience to Allah is keeping the bonds of relationship with one's relatives. When wicked people strengthen their relations with one another, their money will certainly increase and they will be wealthy. Perjury, and termination of one's relations with one's relatives, surely leaves the earth desolate, without people.”

In the domain of jurisprudence, one can form a good idea of the Imam's contribution to Islamic jurisprudence through studying such authoritative books as al-Kafi, Man la Yahdharhu al-Faqih (He who has no access to a Faqih), al-Tahdhib (Refinement), al-Istibsar (Enlightenment), and other books.

Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) was the founder of al-Usool (Fundamentals of Fiqh), but it was his son Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.) who greatly enriched and promoted it.⁵⁴

Next to this, Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) was well- versed in the exegesis of the Qur'an. Ibn al-Nadeem had reportedly said that the Imam was the author of a book on the exegesis of the Qur'an which was copied by al-Jarood Ziyad bin al-Mundhir, the head of the Jaroodi sect which belonged to the Zaydi school of thought. Ali bin Ibrahim bin Hisham included the exegesis in his own exegesis of the Qur'an.

Ibn al-Nadeem, in his list of Islamic books, mentioned al-Hidayah (Guidance) as one of the books written by the Imam (a.s.).⁵⁵

One may be better acquainted with the Imam's role as an exegetist by referring to such books of exegesis as: Majma al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an (Collection of Eloquence in the Exegesis of the Qur'an) by Shaikh Toosi, and al-Mizan fi Tafisr al-Qur'an (The Balanced Exegesis of the Qur'an) by Sayyid Muhammad Hussein Tabatab'i, and other similar books.

The Imam (a.s.) was so acute in comprehending the connotations of the Qur'anic words, and in grasping the Qur'an's concepts and finer subtleties, that one day he said to his companions, as Abu al-Jarood reports, “When I preach to you about a certain thing ask me about the Book of Allah.” Then he added, “Allah certainly forbids you to gossip, misuse your money and importunately demand help from other people”. “O son of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.)”, those who were present asked,

“What is that to do with the Book of Allah?”. And the Imam (a.s.) instantly replied: “And give not away to the weak of understanding your property which Allah has made you (a means of) your sustenance...’Holy Qur'an (4:5). Then he added: “...ask you not about things which if declared unto you will (only) pain you;...” Holy Qur'an (5:101)”⁵⁶

2. Comprehensiveness of Imam Al-Baqir's School

A thorough examination of the books written on the life of Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) presents us with a long list of top intellectuals who shone life stars in the sky of Islamic civilization, all of whom had drunk from the gushing spring of the school of the Imam (a.s.).

“The remnants of the companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.), the leading men among the post-Prophet era Muslims, and the great Muslim

jurisprudents, reported from Imam al-Baqir's teachings of the faith. On account of his virtue, he became a beacon among the virtuous. He became proverbial".⁵⁷

Those persons linked with the Imam (a.s.) were of two kinds:

A. His Attendant Students:

They were learned men who attended his lessons and learnt from him as his regular students. We mention the following: Jabir bin Abdullah al-Ansari, Jabir bin Yadd al-Ju'fi, Himran bin A'yun, and Bikr, Abdul-Rahman, and Abdul-Malik (his brothers), Zirarah bin A'yun, Ma'roof bin Kharboodh al-Makki, Abu-Basir al-Asadi, Fadheel bin Yasar, Muhammad bin Muslim, Yazid bin Mu'awiyah al-'ljili, Salam bin al-Mustanir, al-Hakam bin Abi-Na'im, Aamir bin Abdullah bin Judha'ah, Hijr bin Za'idah, Abdullah bin Sharik al-Aamiri, Muhammad bin Isma'il bin Yazigh, Abdullah bin Maymoon al-Qaddah, Muhammad bin Marwon al-Kufi (a son of Abul-Aswad), Isma'il bin al-Fadhl al-Hashimi, Abu-Haroon al-Makfuf, Aqabah bin Bashir al-Asadi, Tarif bin Nasi', Sa'id bin Tarif al-Du'ali, Isma'il bin Jabir al-Khath'ami, Abu-Basir Layth al-Muradi, Abul-Jarood Ziyad bin al-Munthir, al-Kumayt bin Zayd al-Asadi, Najjah bin' Imarah al-Saydawi, Ma'adh bin Muslim al-Farrah al-Nahwi (the Grammarian), Abdullah bin Abi-Ya'foor, Abban bin Taghlab, Abu-Hamzah al-Thumali, Zayd bin Ali bin al-Hussein (a.s.), and others."⁵⁸

B. His Other Narrators:

They were men who had studied Islamic thought in general, and the traditions of the Prophet (s.a.w.), and exegesis of the Qur'an in particular. They also sought knowledge, in all fields, from Abu-Ja'far (a.s.) (i.e. Imam al-Baqir). Among them were: Umar bin Dinar al-Jumahi, Abdul-Rahman al-A wza 'i, Abdul-Malik bin Abdul-Aziz al-Umawi, Qurrah bin Khalid al-Dawsi, Muhammad bin al-Munkadir al-Qurashi al-Tamimi, Yahya bin Kuthair al-Ta'i, Muhammad bin Muslim al-Zuhri, Abu-Muhammad Sulaiman bin Mihran al-Asadi, Abu-Uthman Rabi'ah bin Abdul-Rahman al-Tamimi, Abu-Muhammad Abdullah bin Abi-Bakr al-Ansari (one of the teachers of Imam Malik), the leader of one Islamic school), Abu-Haroon al-Madani, al-Qasim bin Muhammad bin Abi-Bakr, Kisan al-Sakhitani (a famous sufi), Ibn al-Mubarak, Abu-Hanifah al-Nu'man bin Thabit, Muhammad bin Idris al-Shafi'i, Ziyah bin al-Mundhir al-Handabi.

Other men reported from him, including al-Tabari in his history book; al-Baladhiri, al-Salami, al-Khatib, the authors of Al-Muwatta (The Preparatory Book), Sharaf al-Mustafa (Honour of al-Mustafa), al-Ibanah (The Explanation), Hilyat al-Awliya', Sunan Abu-Dawood, al-Alkani, al-Mirwazi, al-Asfahani (author of al-Tarhib/ Allurement), al-Zamakhshari, al-Naqqash (an exegetist of the Qur'an), al-Wahidi (author of al-Basit /The Simple Book, and others.⁵⁹

It is worth mentioning that Imam al-Baqir's school was not confined only to scholars known for their desire to seek knowledge, but also to the common, ordinary people.

The common people had a chance to benefit from this school. At mass meetings, such as the annual ritual occasion of haj), Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) would receive the people in his quarters and answer their questions.⁶⁰

His house in Madinah served as a centre of guidance, a beacon by which hearts clearly saw the path of virtue, and towards which eyes were turned to acquire knowledge and to be led in the best way towards Allah.

UMAYYAD POLICY DURING AL-BAQIR'S TIME

In the year 95 A.H., Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.) was assassinated. His son, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) patiently shouldered the responsibility of Imamate. His term of Imamate lasted 19 years, two years of which were under the rule of al-Walid bin Abdul-Malik, and two other years were under the rule of Sulaiman bin Abdul-Malik, the Umayyad ruler who assumed power for only two years.

Conditions of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.), apparently, did not improve under his caliphate. The gap between Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) and the ruling Umayyad family was ever-widening. Rankling in the minds were the assassination of Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.) by poison, and the tragedy of Karbala before it.

Fearing to lose his power to the family of the Prophet (s.a.w.), especially after he had committed the crime of killing Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.), Sulaiman bin Abdul-Malik plunged himself, throughout his short rule, into physically eliminating all the leading men who were trusted and depended on by his predecessor, al-Walid. For personal reasons, he directed his anger toward the family of al-Hajjaj. Also, he sacked all the main governors appointed by al-Walid. Some of them were sentenced to death like Muhammad bin al-Qasim⁶¹. Though he was busy getting rid of al-Walids' men, it did not prevent him from enjoying the luxury of good food, women, and extravagant living. He was judged by the historians as more corrupt than all the Umayyad rulers who had preceded him.⁶²

When Umar bin Abdul-Aziz ascended to power, a great change was brought about which was to the advantage of Islam. Though his term was short, his position towards Ahlul-Bait was on the whole, fair. He undid many of the injustices which had been done against them. The practice of cursing Imam Ali (a.s.) on the pulpits of the mosque, which was first introduced by Mu'awiyah, and remained an obligatory practice, not only in the capital but all over the Islamic state, and kept as part of the Friday address by the Umayyad rulers, was actually stopped by Umar. Umar replaced it by this verse: "Surely Allah enjoins justice and benevolence..." Holy Qur'an (16:90)⁶³

Umar restored Fadak⁶⁴ to Imam al-Baqir (a.s.), considering its confiscation by the previous Umayyad rulers as unjustifiable: Hisham bin Ma'adh said, "I was with Umar bin Abdul-Aziz when he visited the city of Madinah. He ordered his herald to call out, "Whoever has a complaint, let him come in'. Muhammad bin Ali appeared at the door, and Muzahim, Umar's manservant told him, 'Muhammad bin Ali is at the door.'"

"Muzahim", ordered Umar, "Allow him in." When Muhammad entered, Umar was wiping his tears away. "What has made you cry, Umar?" asked Muhammad bin Ali.

"Such and such made him cry, O son of the Messenger of Allah", I told him.

"O Umar", said Muhammad bin Ali, "Life is like a market place, from which some people come out with what will benefit them, while others leave with what will harm them. How many people were tempted by this life which we are living till death came to them. They exhausted the duration of their life. They left this world blamed for they had not done what would win them

the agreeable pleasures of the next world which they liked, nor had they prepared a cover to protect them from what they hated. What they amassed was divided by those who did not praise them, and they came into the presence of the One Who does not excuse them. And so we are, by Allah! at fault. We should examine their deeds, which we would wish to have the like of, and act to achieve them. And we have to examine the deeds for, which we fear for those people on their account, and give them up. So, fear Allah, and do not lose sight of two things: Seek that which you would love to be with you when you meet your Lord, and carefully do it, and see which thing you would hate to be with you when you meet your Lord and replace it by something better. Do not hurry to obtain an article, which proved cheap to those who were before you, in the hope that it will be a reward for you. Fear Allah, the Almighty and the High, O Umar. Keep your doors open, lift the curtain that separates you from the people, help the wronged, and stop the unjust". Then he said, "Anyone having these qualities has certainly secured true belief in Allah".

Umar, from a crouching position said, "Tell me more, O Household of the Prophet".

"Yes Umar", went on the Imam. "When one is pleased, one's pleasure does not drag one into falsehood. When one gets angry, one's anger does not make one overlook the right. When one feels strong, one does not snatch away what does not belong to one."

Umar called for an ink pot and a paper and wrote, "In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Umar bin Abdul-Aziz hereby restores Fadak, which was unjustly confiscated, to Muhammad bin Ali".⁶⁵

As the Umayyads were not used to peace between Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) and the Umayyad authorities, they began to put pressure on Umar bin Abdul-Aziz for his moderate policy. Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) says on the authority of his father Imam al-Baqir (a.s.), "When Umar bin Abdul-Aziz ascended the caliphate, he rewarded us with great bounties. His brother visited him and told him; the Umayyads do not agree with you in preferring the sons of Fatimah over them".

"I prefer them", said Umar, "because I have heard, and I do not care what others say, that the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.) often said; 'Fatimah is a branch from me. What pleases her certainly pleases me', and what annoys her certainly annoys me; thus I seek the pleasure of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) and avoid annoying him".⁶⁶

Umar bin Abdul-Aziz remained in power for only two years and five months. After him, Yazid bin Abdul-Malik, historically known for his adultery, debauchery and obscene poetry, took over. But if Yazid could not find time, on account of his indulgence in his pleasures,⁶⁷ to block the Islamic march led by Imam al-Baqir (a.s.), his successor, Hisham bin Abdul-Malik, adamantly fought the Islamic movement. Rough-mannered, miserly, coarse, and hating non-Arab Muslims, he raised the taxes imposed on them.⁶⁸ He revived the bloody days of Yazid and al-Hajjaj. Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) did not stand idly by.

Zaid bin Ali (a.s.) a brother of Imam al-Baqir, led an uprising, which was an echo of that of Imam Hussein (a.s.), against the tyrants. He attained

martyrdom, along with all his followers at Kufa in Iraq. Hisham ordered his body be crucified, burnt⁶⁹, and its ashes be scattered in the river Euphrates.

But Umayyad tyranny did not stop at killing Zaid and his true-believing companions. The next target were the key joints of the Islamic movement led by Imam al-Baqir and his disciples.

Hisham, the Umayyad ruler, decided to get rid of Jabir bin Yazid al-Ju'fi, the best of the Imam's students. But the Imam (a.s.) foiled the plot by ordering Jabir to pretend madness as the only way to escape death⁷⁰. There was no better choice than this facing the Imam.

The reader can imagine the scope of the injustices done to the followers of the Divine Message, and the atmosphere of terror created by the Umayyads at that time. Otherwise why should a man, known for his knowledge and virtues, pretend madness, risk being insulted by children, and bring himself to play with them?

And so al-Ju'fi rode on a stick, and hanged an animal's heel bone around his neck and went out playing in the alleys of Kufa. Children gathered around him shouting, "Jabir has gone mad".⁷¹

A few days later Hisham ordered his governor in Kufa to put Jabir al-Ju'fi to the sword and send his head to Damascus, but when the governor asked about Jabir he was told, "May Allah grant you success. He was a man of knowledge and virtue, but he has gone out of his mind. Right now he is riding his stick, playing in the city square with the boys"⁷². Having heard that, the governor changed his mind. There was no point in killing a madman.

Nevertheless, Hisham held the conviction that the sole source of sound Islamic awareness was Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.). He was convinced that leaving the Imam alone would mean giving him more time to enhance the reform movement and make it firm and steadfast. The grandson of Marwan thought of a way to prevent the Imam (a.s.) from working on behalf of the ummah and the message. He made up his mind to arrest the Imam (a.s.) and deport him from Madinah, the capital of his great great grandfather Muhammad (s.a.w.), which, along with Hijaz, revered the Imam (a.s.) and sympathized with him.

To Damascus the Imam and his son Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s) were taken, where they were thrown behind bars to cut off their relations with the ummah.

But even there, the Imam (a.s.) impressed all those who came his way. Shortly afterwards the Imam was set free.

Abu-Bakr al-Hadhrami offers this explanation, "When Abu-Ja'far (i.e. Imam al-Baqir) was taken to Syria, and brought to Hisham bin Abdul-Malik, and was kept at the door waiting to be allowed in, Hisham said to his companions, "When I have scolded Muhammad bin Ali, it will be your turn to berate him!" Then he allowed him to come in. When Abu-Ja'far entered he said Al-Salamu-Alaikum (peace be upon you all) and waved his hand to indicate that he was greeting all the people present there. Then he sat down. Hisham was by now furious that the Imam (a.s.) had not performed the proper respectful greeting for the caliph, as was done by all the people, and that he had sat without permission.

'O Muhammad', said he, 'You are still stirring up dissension among Muslims, calling people to follow you, and ignorantly and foolishly claiming to be the Imam (of the ummah)'. Then he began severely scolding him. When Hisham ended his scolding, the people, one by one, spoke impolitely with the Imam (a.s.). When the people finally fell silent, the Imam (a.s.) rose to his feet and said, 'O people, do you know what you are doing, and where you are led to? With us Allah guided the first among you, and with us He shall seal the fate of the last of you. If you have a kingdom now, we shall have one later on. There shall be no kingdom after ours, for we are the blessed people who will win lasting happiness, for Allah, the Almighty and Exalted, says, "And happy shall be the lot of the righteous"'.

At this point, Hisham ordered him be imprisoned.

At prison, the Imam preached to the prisoners. All them gathered around him and listened eagerly to what he had to say. The jailer went to Hisham and told him what was going on. And so Hisham ordered that the Imam be taken, sent by "the post"⁷³ along with his followers, "and returned to Madinah".⁷⁴

While al-Hadhrami insists that the Imam (a.s.) was released from the Umayyad prison because of the positive effect he had on the prisoners, Muhammad bin Jarir al-Tabari, in his book Dala'ilal-Imamah (Signs of Imamate)⁷⁵ maintains that he (a.s.) was set free because of his influence over the people of Damascus. The Imam had a prolonged argument with the head of Christians in the city. He refuted their opinions and disclosed their falseness, and explained all the doubts raised by some people about Islam. Yet there is no real contradiction between the two stories, as the Imam (a.s.) would declare the right wherever he was, free or shackled, as long as there was someone who would listen without prejudice.

There was no alternative but to physically eliminate the Imam. That was the final decision of the Umayyad authorities. Whatever the Umayyads had done had not achieved the prime objective which was to put an end to the Imam's activities.

The Imam was assassinated by poison in the year 114 AH.⁷⁶ [732 AD], at the age of fifty seven years.

He departed to meet his Lord seeking Allah's pleasure and reward.

Peace be upon him on the day he was born, on the day he died, and on the day when he shall be raised to life.

All praise be to Allah, the Lord of the world.

ENDNOTES

- 1 His father is Imam Ali, Zain al-Abideen, bin Imam Hussein bin Imam Ali bin Abi-Talib (a.s.).
- 2 Bihar al-Anwar (seas of Lights), Chapter on his birth and death, vol.46.
- 3 Al-Irshad (Guidance), Shaikh al-Mufid. AI-Fusool al-Muhimmah (The Important Chapters), Ibn al-Sabbagh al-Maliki. Tarikh al-Ya'qoobi (History of al-Ya'qoobi), vol.3. Nooral-Absar (Light of Eyes), Al-Shablanji. Tadhkirat- al-Khawas (Admonishing Prominent People), Ibn al-Jawzi, with slight difference in wordings.
- 4 Al-Irshad, Shaikh al-Mufid, On his Imamate (a.s.)
- 5 Al-Imam al-Sadiq wa al-Madhahib al-Arba'ah (Imam al-Sadiq and the Four Schools of Thought), vol.2 quoted from Tahdheeb al-Asma' wa al-Lughat (Revision of Names and Dialects) by al-Nawawi.
- 6 Ibid, quoted from Shadharat al-Thahab (Fragments of Gold), vol.1, p.149.
- 7 Ibid, quoted from Matalib al-Su'al (Prerequisites of Question), vol.2, p.50.
- 8 Ibid, quoted from AI-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah (The Beginning and the End), vol. 9/p.309.
- 9 Bihar al-Anwar, His high morals, vol.46.
- 10 Ikmal al-Deen wa Itmam al-Ni'mah (Perfection of Religion and Completion of Favour), Shaikh Sadooq, p. 252.
- 11 Yanabi' al-Mawaddah (Springs of Love), Ilzam al-Nasib (Refutation of Ahlul-Bait's Avowed Enemy), Ikmal al-Deen wa Itmam al-Ni'mah.
- 12 Al-Irshad, Shaikh al-Mufid, About Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.), p.294.
- 13 Al-Bihar, vol.48, Texts about his Imamate, quoted from Kifayat al-Athar (Adequacy of Prophetic Traditions).
- 14 Ibid, vol.48, quoted from Kifayat al-Athar, p. 319.
- 15 Ibid, vol.42, p.25. Ham al-Wara bi A'lam al-Huda (Acquainting People with the Leaders of Guidance). And Kashf al-Ghummah fi Ma'rifat al-A'immah (Removal of Grief by Knowing the Imams).
- 16 For further information see: Usool al-Kafi, vol.1, p.305, (Tehran), 3rd ed.
- 17 Yanabi' al-Mawaddah, AI-Balaxhi al-Qandoozi. Similar traditions are mentioned in Usool al-Kafi, vol.1, Chapter on the evenness of the Imams (a.s.) in their knowledge, bravery and obedience to Allah.
- 18 Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 46. His High Morals and Life. AI-Fusool al-Muhimmah, Ibn al-Sabbagh al-Maliki.
- 19 Bihar al-Anwar, AI-Fussol al-Muhimmah, Kashf al-Ghummah fi Ma'rifat al-A'immah, vol. 3, His virtues.
- 20 Miftah al-Sa'il (Clue to the Asker). Tasbeeh al-Zahra' (Praise of al-Zahra') is the recitation of Allahu-Akbar 34 times, al-Hamdu lillah (Praise be to Allah) 33 times, and Subban Allah (Glorified is Allah), at the end of prayer.
- 21 Tuhaf al-Uqool (Treasures of Minds), Ibn Shu'bah al-Harrani, About his advice to Jabir al-Ju'fi.
- 22 Bihar al-Anwar, p. 46, Chapter on his High Morals and Life.
- 23 Al-Irshad, AI-Mufid, Virtues of Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.).
- 24 Al-Irshad, Manaqib Aal Abi-Talib (Virtues of the Family of Abu-Talib), vol.3, About his Excellent Deeds.
- 25 Al-Irshad, Manaqib Aal Abi- Talib, Bihar al-Anwar, vol.46.
- 26 Bihar al-Anwar, vol.46, Chapter on his high morals and life. Kashf al-Ghummah, vol.2. Andal-Fusoolal-Muhimmah, Ibn al-Sabbagh al-Maliki, with slight difference in wording and narrating.
- 27 A'yan al-Shi'ah (Chiefs of Shi'ites), vol.4, p.12, 3rd edition (1960).
- 28 Al-Irshad, Statements quoted from Imam Ali (a.s.).
- 29 Tuhaf al-Uqool, AI-Harrani, Maxims and Admonitions from Abu-Ja'far (a.s.).
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 'Baqaar' literally means 'cow'. As a verb it means 'rip open'.

- 32 Manaqib Aal Abi-Talib, vol.3. About his Excellent Deeds. A'yan al-Shi'ah / vol.4, About the life of Imam al-Baqir (a.s.).
- 33 Ibid, vol.3, His Knowledge. A'yan al-Shi'ah quoted from Hilyat al-Awliya', by Abu-Na'im.
- 34 Al-Irshad, Al-Mufid, About the Imamate of al-Baqir (a.s.). A'yan al-Shia'h quoted from Hilyat al-Awliya'. Tadhkirat al-Khawwas, by Ibn al-Jawzi, with slight difference in wordings.
- 35 Refer to his biography in Wafiyat al-A'yan (Deaths of Chiefs), vol.3, 1st edition, (1948).
- 36 Al-Ihtijaj (Reasoned Arguments), vol. 2, Argument of Imam al-Baqir (a.s.).
- 37 Al-Irshad, Virtues of Imam al-Baqir (a.s.).
- 38 AI-Furoo' min al-Kafi, Book on way of Imam's living, Traditions from the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.).
- 39 Tadhkirat al-Khawwas, Sibt bin al-Jawzi, Life of Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) and excerpts of his maxims.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 A'yan al-Shia'h, Muhsin al-'Amili, quoted from Hilyat al-Awliya', by Abu-Na'im al-Asfahani, vol.1, p.657, 5th edition.
- 42 Tuhaf al-Uqool, AI-Harrani, Maxims and Admonitions from Abu-Ja'far (a.s.).
- 43 Al-Imam al-Sadiq wa al-Madhahib al-Arba'ah, vol.2, quoted from Ayn al-Adab wa al-Siyasah and al-Tiraz (Essance of Literature. Politics and Style).
- 44 Imam Zain al-Abideen, Publications of AI-Balagh Foundation.
- 45 Al-Irshad. AI-Mufid, Imam al-Baqir (a.s.)
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Bihar al-Anwar, vol.46, His knowledge. Quoted from Rijal al-Kishshi (Biographies of al-Kishshi).
- 48 Bihar al-Anwar, vol.46, Quoted from AI-Ikhtisas.
- 49 Tadhkrat al-Khawwas, Sibt bin al-Jawzi, About Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.).
- 50 Manaqib Aal abi-Talib, vol.3, His knowledge.
- 51 These arguments are mentioned by many books, at the head of which are: Ihtijaj al-Tubrusi, vol.2. Bihar al-Anwar, vol.1. Chapter on arguments. Bihar al-Anwar, vol.46, Life of Imam al-Baqir (a.s.).
- 52 Tuhaf al-Uqool, Chapter on what had been reported from Abu-Ja'far (a.s.).
- 53 Ibid, Short sayings, Chapter on what had been reported from Abu-Ja'far.
- 54 Al-Imam al-Sadiq wa al-Madhahib al-Arba'ah, vol.2, p. 229, Eva of Imam al-Baqir (a.s.).
- 55 A'yan al-Shi'ah, vol.1, p.656, 5th edition, Life of al-Baqir (a.s.).
- 56 Bihar al-Anwar, vol.46, Chapter on his High Morals and Life.
- 57 Al-Irshad, Shaikh al-Mufid, p. 293.
- 58 Bihar al-Anwar, vol.46, Narratives about his companions. AI-Manaqib (Virtues), Chapter on his knowledge. Al-Imam al-Sadiq wa al-Madhahib al-Araba'ah, vol.2. His students and those who reported from him. Tahdhib al-Tahdhib (Refinement of Refinement), Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, p.350, 1st ed.
- 59 Bihar al-Anwar, Narratives about Imam's companions, vol. 46. AI-Manaqib (Virtues), His knowledge. Al-Imam al-Sadiq wa al-Madhahib al-Arba'ah, His students and narrators, vol. 2. Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, vol. 9, p.35, 1st ed.
- 60 Al-Imam al-Sadiq wa al-Madhahib al-Arba'ah, vol.2, p. 165.
- 61 Tarikh al-Islam, Dr. Hassan Ibrahim Hassan, vol.1, pp.330-331, 8th ed. (1974).
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 Ibid, vol.1, p.336.
- 64 Fadak was a big orchard given by the Prophet (s.a.w.) to his daughter, Fatimah al-Zahra'. (a.s.).
- 65 AI-Khisal, "Three qualities" Chapters, p.100, AI-Haidariyyah Printing press, Najaf (1971). Bihar al-Anwar, Narratives about Imam's companions and the people at that time, vol.4.

66 Bihar al-Anwar, Narratives about his companions, and the people, including the caliphs, at his time, vol.46, Quoted from Qurb al-lsnad, p. 7 72.

67 Tarikh al-Islam, Dr. Hassan Ibrahim Hassan, Yazid bin Abdul-Malik, vol. 1.

68 Ibid, Hisham bin Abdul-Malik.

69 Ibid.

70 Manaqib Aal Abi-Talib, vol.3, pp.323-324.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid, p.324.

73 Formerly, goods, letters and even prisoners were often dispatched by a post system that connected every two cities, particularly those separated by long distances. At certain points, post stations were kept with enough couriers and horses. The couriers would deliver the letters, goods or prisoners to the men at the next station. These would similarly take them to the next, and so forth.

74 Manaqib Aal Abi-Talib, vol.3, pp.322-323. The story of Imam's deportation to Syria was narrated in different books with different versions. See: Bihar al Anwar, vol.46, quoted from Aman al-Akhtar (Immunity from Dangers) by Ibn Tawoos, Dala'il al-lfadhah (Signs of Blessings) by al-Tabari, Qur'anic Exegesis by All bin Ibrahim, AI-Manaqib by Ibn Shahrashub, p.334, and other books.

75 Bihar al-Anwar, His deportation to Syria, vol.46, p.306, quoted from Dala'il al-Imamah by al-Tabari, p.104.

76 A'yan al-Shi'ah, Muhsin al-Amin, vol. 4, p. 3.